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# Matthew Lyon in Kentucky

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MATTHEW LYON IN KENTUCKY

BY

LYDA PEEK SMITH

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

WESTERN KENTUCKY STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE

JUNE, 1932

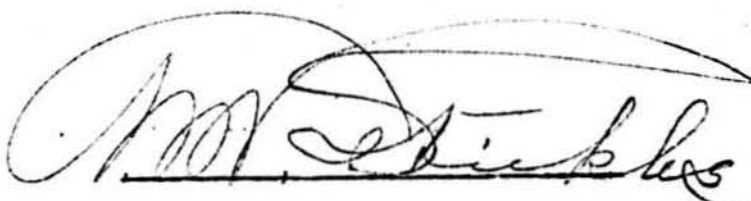
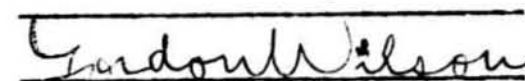
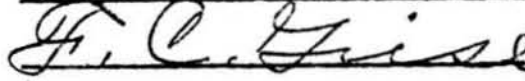
Approved:-

Major Professor

Department of-----

Minor Professor

Graduate Committee

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## FOREWORD

"Men at some time are masters of their fate:  
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,  
But in ourselves, that we are underlings."

Thus Shakespeare has the wily Cassius speak, and thus Matthew Lyon must have believed; else he had not contended so fiercely, so incessantly, and so interminably against such adverse circumstances as the average individual would have submitted to sooner or later. Many may have thought so; the facts often indicated so; yet never in a true sense was Matthew Lyon an underling. His fierce spirit was supreme over material things. Even while an indentured servant he resented and successfully resisted the efforts of his master to direct or control his democratic principles.<sup>1</sup> Suppliant though he was in his later years for political preferment, on account of his financial losses ensuing from a curtailment of our commerce during the Napoleonic wars and our own War of 1812 and by a political defeat resulting from his having opposed the administrative policies which preceded our entrance into that war,<sup>2</sup> yet even in that period of political and financial reverses his restless, forceful pen, schooled in the denunciatory era of the Jefferson-Hamilton party strife, wielded an influence not to be disregarded, even by the new political leaders of that day.

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<sup>1</sup> Reporter, Lexington, Kentucky, May 14, 1817.

Still, Fate, thwarted by an indomitable spirit in life, may now be exercising her influence, for the conflict that marked the career of this "pugnacious but incorruptible"<sup>2</sup> son of Erin did not cease with his demise. It is with difficulty that one can construct from the conflicting statements concerning his actions and career an approximately accurate account of the most significant events of that career. Such is the task the writer will attempt to perform, dealing chiefly with that period succeeding Lyon's arrival in Kentucky, where for the second time he entered into the activities essential to the development, on a large scale, of an industrial center in frontier life, and where, with better success and less strife than he had formerly experienced, he re-entered the political arena.

Concerning Lyon's commercial and political experiences in the West very little has been written save occasional brief articles, often inaccurate and founded more or less on hearsay and tradition. McLaughlin's very unsatisfactory biographical history of Lyon deals but briefly with his Kentucky career;<sup>3</sup> in Aunt Leanna or Early Scenes in Kentucky<sup>4</sup> and also in Recollections of a Frontier Life,<sup>5</sup> written by Lyon's youngest daughter, Mrs. Elizabeth Ann Roe, primarily in the interest of abolition and Methodism, respectively, are related some things of interest con-

<sup>2</sup> Thomas E. Watson, Life and Times of Thomas Jefferson (New York, 1927), p. 396.

<sup>3</sup> J. Fairfax McLaughlin, Matthew Lyon, The Hampden of Congress, (New York, 1900).

<sup>4</sup> Published at Chicago, 1855.

<sup>5</sup> Published at Rockford, Illinois, 1885.

- cerning Lyon; but since these are the reminiscences of one far removed in time and space from the scenes and events described, her accounts are not wholly reliable. Other secondary matter is more or less a repetition of the outstanding facts of Lyon's life, for, contrary to what might be supposed, Lyon enjoyed in his own day a well-founded national fame. From Lyon's own writings, found in newspapers and various collections in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, from county court records, from departmental, national, and state documents, and from occasional secondary matter the writer has obtained the facts contained in this thesis.

Certain incidents in Lyon's early life so strongly influenced his character and his importance that a knowledge of them was considered necessary to an understanding and appreciation of his later life; for this reason Chapters I and II are included.

## CHAPTER I

### IN IRELAND AND NEW ENGLAND

It is significant that revolutionary Ireland should have been the birthplace of the subject of this sketch, a man of thoroughly democratic principles who contended for those principles, not always wisely, on all occasions when he felt their free exercise was challenged, with a zeal and ardor characteristic of the Celtic race. The conditions under which he passed his boyhood and young manhood were such as might, had he been older, or less frank and truthful, have made of him a cynic, but such was not the effect; he lived to a fairly old age among manifold vicissitudes, always believing in himself and in his fellow man until his judgment directed his conclusions otherwise in specific instances. Truly could he say with his countryman Jasper of Fort Moultrie fame: "Adversity has been my school-master and liberty my only school-mistress."<sup>1</sup>

Matthew Lyon was born in Wicklow County, Ireland, near Dublin, about the middle of the eighteenth century. If he be accurate in his calculations, the exact date of his birth is July 12, 1749.<sup>2</sup> However, the generally accepted date is July

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<sup>1</sup> Fairfax Braxton, "The Irish in Our Revolution," National Republican, March, 1932, p.25.

<sup>2</sup> Lyon in a letter to the Bureau of Pensions, Washington, D. C., dated June 28, 1820, states that on that day he is 70 years, 11 months, and 16 days old. Letter from Bureau of Pensions to writer, September 30, 1931.

14, 1750.<sup>3</sup> All efforts of the writer to obtain a record of his birth or baptism from the parish canons of County Wicklow have been unavailing; a diligent search has revealed no record of Matthew, though the family name of Lyon, Lyons, and Lyone occur quite frequently during the period in question.<sup>4</sup>

Who his parents were is not known, but Lyon refers to his father as his "high-minded, intelligent parent," who was "considered a learned, a wise, and true man, who would go as far as any man in defense of his friend or his country"; yet was never permitted to bear arms.<sup>5</sup> In speaking of his mother, Lyon says that she was "a fine, hale, healthy woman."<sup>6</sup> Very little also can positively be stated concerning the other members of the family. Lyon's letter to Madison, January 22, 1809, in which he expressed a desire to visit England, where his only surviving sister then lived, indicates there had been other sisters.<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Elizabeth Roe, Lyon's youngest daughter, states that her father brought to America and reared as his own five of the orphaned children of his sister, Mrs. Edwards, wife of a sea

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<sup>3</sup> The family Bible in possession of Mrs. M. F. de Graffenried, Eddyville, Kentucky, has this date. The records of this Bible, however, are incomplete, and may therefore have been filled in subsequent to the death of the members of the immediate family. The title pages of this Bible are lacking; so the date of publication cannot be determined. See also J. F. McLaughlin, Matthew Lyon the Hampden of Congress (New York, 1900), p.1.

<sup>4</sup> G. D. Scott, canon, Parish Bray, County Wicklow, Ireland, to writer, Dec. 12, 1931. The writer has also other letters from parish canons of County Wicklow.

<sup>5</sup> Reporter, Lexington, Kentucky, May 14, 1817.

<sup>6</sup> Annals of Congress, Fifth Congress, 1797-1799, I, 235.

<sup>7</sup> Madison Papers, Library of Congress.

captain, who died in Dublin.<sup>8</sup> It is possible that these two references are to the same sister. The writer has been unable to find any reference to any other children, although some of Lyon's descendants of to-day are of the opinion that there were twelve children in the family.<sup>9</sup>

The father died before Lyon's departure for America in 1765; the mother died before 1798, for in that year on the floor of Congress Lyon speaks of her in the past tense.<sup>10</sup> Tradition says that the father was hanged as a result of his having participated in the Whiteboy Rebellion against English rule.<sup>11</sup> This particular rebellion occurred in the period 1750-1760. Lyon, however, in the only instance wherein the writer has found him to make mention of his father's demise, merely writes, "By death I lost that father whose whole soul was bent on giving me a finished education."<sup>12</sup> It would seem that had his father been executed by British law, Lyon at this time, when he is denouncing those who would withhold the people's rights, would have made mention of it. Tradition also says that Lyon's mother married again after the father's death, and that the step-father treated the lad cruelly.<sup>13</sup> Mrs. Roe's statements do not substantiate these reports.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>9</sup> Mrs. Fannie Lyon Doughty to the writer, December 8, 1931.

<sup>10</sup> Annals of Congress, loc. cit.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Collins, History of Kentucky, 2 Vols. (Covington, 1878), II, 491.

<sup>12</sup> Reporter, loc. cit.

<sup>13</sup> Collins, loc. cit.

<sup>14</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 40.



The youth attended a classical school in Dublin, where he acquired a fair knowledge of English, Greek, and Latin.<sup>15</sup> Evidently his father's death cut short his educational career, for he did not finish school abroad as his father had planned for him to do;<sup>16</sup> but at the age of thirteen he was apprenticed to a book binder and seller in Dublin.<sup>17</sup> It was probably from his association with books, both as a printer and seller, that he later obtained an education far beyond that of most men of his day. His crude mannerisms, which his democratic spirit perhaps too deeply fostered, left the impression on many that he was an ignorant man,<sup>18</sup> but such was far from being true. A perusal of his writings clearly reveals the fact that he was familiar with the best writers; he knew always, from books and from the columns of the press, which he read diligently, and which were often supplied with productions from his own facile pen, what was happening in the political and economic world; this knowledge, together with his own opinions on the subject, he kept continuously before the public by means of speeches, circular letters, etc., in language that revealed a vocabulary extensive and forceful and a knowledge and practice of composition excelled by only a few of his day.

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<sup>15</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>16</sup> Reporter, May 14, 1817.

<sup>17</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> "Memoirs of Micah Taul," Register of Kentucky State Historical Society, January, 1929.

Before his departure from Ireland he had witnessed much opposition to the rule of England, especially in his own home, where his father "bore his fate bewailing." This caused the youth to decide that once he left that land of oppression, "where nineteen-twentieths of the people by tyrannic laws, founded on usurpation are incapable of electing or being elected to even the lowest public station," he would not return unless "combined with a force destined to break the chains which bound millions in slavery."<sup>19</sup> It was not destined that he should do this; yet he and many of his countrymen were later to find satisfaction in opposing Britain in that momentous struggle which was indeed to result in the independence of millions.

In this Dublin book shop Lyon read much about America and the opportunities to be found there; his reading habits of later years, indicated by his extant writings, lead one to believe this activity was limited only by his amount of leisure and the accessibility of material. Here, too, he learned the art of printing, through which he and his associates were to disseminate their ideas of democracy and party principles and herald the approach of civilization and industry on the American frontier. This reading, together with that universal lure of the wanderlust that every normal youth experiences, caused the Irish lad to take a step that was not without its effect on American history.

At the age of fourteen and one-half years Lyon found him-

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<sup>19</sup>

Reporter, May 14, 1817.



self an indentured servant in Woodbury, Connecticut.<sup>20</sup> He, with other youths of Ireland, anxious to escape the oppressions of his native land, was easily induced by a sea captain to leave his home and his mother in a clandestine manner and to come to America. It is said that Lyon made a bargain with the captain, engaging himself as cabin boy for his fare, and giving for safe keeping to the captain his whole fortune, a guinea, which was to establish him in the New World. But falling sick on the way over, he was unable to fulfill his part of the bargain; so he, along with the other youths, was sold upon his arrival in New York, for the price of his passage. Jabez Bacon, a wealthy merchant, bought him and put him to work in his store at Woodbury.<sup>21</sup> His guinea was not returned.<sup>22</sup> Again Lyon was placed in a position which was to influence greatly his later life, for it was as a merchant that he amassed and lost, both in Vermont and Kentucky, what was in those days a handsome fortune, sufficient, in the latter case, to warrant his being termed a "Mississippi River magnate."<sup>23</sup>

Soon, however, the republican principles of the Irish lad led Bacon, who was a Tory, to transfer the papers of indenture

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Reporter, May 14, 1817.

21

George C. Woodruff, History of the Town of Litchfield, Connecticut (Litchfield, 1845), p. 358.

22

McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 41.

23

L. M. Sears, Jefferson and the Embargo (Durham, N. C., 1927), p. 241.

to Hugh Hannah and Jesse Leavensworth in exchange for two stags, valued at twelve pounds, or forty dollars.<sup>24</sup> This transaction is the source of the oath which Lyon is said so often to have used, "By the bulls that bought me."<sup>25</sup> Kipling makes use of the same expression in "Mowgli's Oath." Which of his two new owners was prior in possession is not known; certainly Leavensworth was not wealthy, for in 1774 the Connecticut assembly granted him freedom from arrest on account of his inability to pay his debts.<sup>26</sup> The records of that colony show that Leavensworth had military service under Arnold; it was probably he who attempted to control Lyon's first vote and felt the force of the latter's hard argument.<sup>27</sup>

It was about 1765 that Lyon arrived in America, and he probably became free three years later, though the exact date of either event is unknown. The youth of fourteen and one-half years was doubtless sold for one of more maturity in order that his period of servitude might be decreased, and it is likely that from this circumstance arises the misconception concerning the date of his birth, which is often given as 1746.<sup>28</sup> We surmise that Lyon was free in 1768, for he wrote to Jefferson in

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Pliny P. White, Life and Service of Matthew Lyon (Rutland, Vt., 1858), p. 6.

25

Collins, op. cit., II, 491.

26

Colonial Records of Connecticut (Hartford, 1881), XII, 362.

27

Reporter, May 14, 1817.

28

Collins, op. cit., II, 491.

1808 that forty years before he had contemplated setting out with an Indian guide for the Lake Superior region to explore the prospects for mining copper there.<sup>29</sup>

In Litchfield, Connecticut, whence Lyon was taken by Hannah or Leavensworth, lived the Allens and the Chittendens. Here Lyon fell in love with and married Mary Hosford, favorite niece of Ethan and Ira Allen. It is not reasonable to believe that Lyon with his aggressiveness and industry was penniless, even when he first became a freedman. In fact, it may be that he purchased his freedom.<sup>30</sup> However, the leading families of Connecticut were democratic enough to receive him as an equal, even if he were penniless.

Lyon's marriage to Miss Hosford is said to have occurred when he was twenty-one.<sup>31</sup> To this union were born four children: James, Ann, Pamela, and Lorrain.<sup>32</sup> The writer has not been able to determine whether Ann or James was the oldest child, but is inclined to believe that the latter was.<sup>33</sup>

Lorrain was famed for her beauty. She died unmarried in 1800<sup>34</sup> at the age of eighteen and was the first white person buried in Eddyville, Kentucky, cemetery. Tradition says that

<sup>29</sup> Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress, December 24, 1808.

<sup>30</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 40

<sup>32</sup> A. N. Adams, History of Fair Haven, Vermont (Fair Haven, 1870), p. 416.

<sup>33</sup> See Chittenden Lyon's letter to Judge Witherell, Ibid., p. 424. See also James B. Lyon's letter to writer, April 6, 1932.

<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Lyon Roe, Aunt Leanna, or Early Scenes in Kentucky (Chicago, 1855), p. 25. The monument in Eddyville cemetery bears this date.

she was engaged to be married and that the place selected for her home became her burial place.

Ann married John Messinger, and Pamela married Dr. George Cadwell. The Messinger and Cadwell families migrated to Eddyville, Kentucky, in 1799, and in 1802 both families moved to the American Bottom in Illinois.<sup>35</sup> Both of these men were prominent in Illinois politics, each of them having been elected often to the legislature of that state. Mr. Messinger was the speaker of the House of Representatives in the first General Assembly in 1818.<sup>36</sup> These families were influential in pioneer Illinois; Cadwell was a practicing physician, and Messinger was a professor of mathematics and surveying at Rock Island Seminary. Through their influence and Lyon's own commercial and political associations with prominent men of that territory, Lyon had a hand in shaping the affairs of Illinois.<sup>37</sup>

James Lyon, the eldest son, was born in Wallingford, Vermont, April 15, 1775.<sup>38</sup> At an early age he was apprenticed to the printing establishment of Benjiman Franklin, in Philadelphia, and became a pioneer in the newspaper field. Together with his father he published at Fair Haven, Vermont, The Scourge of Aris-

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John Reynolds, Pioneer History of Illinois (Belleville, Illinois, 1852), p. 277.

36

Ibid., p. 280.

37

Clarence W. Alford, The Illinois Country, 1673-1818 (Chicago, 1922), p. 426.

38

James B. Lyon, The Lyon Family (Jacksonville, Fla., 1923), p. 21, gives 1775. The author in a letter to the writer April 6, 1932, corrects this.



THE ABOVE IS A PICTURE OF THE ST. DAVID EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND CHURCH YARD, AT CHERAW, S. C. THE TWO STONES APPEARING BETWEEN THE GATE POSTS ARE THOSE AT GRAVES OF TWO OF JAMES LYON'S CHILDREN. A VIEW OF THE STONE AT THE GRAVES OF JAMES LYON AND WIFE IS OBSTRUCTED BY ONE OF THE GATE POSTS.

After a life of vicissitudes comparable to those which marked his father's career, James Lyon, eldest son of Colonel Matthew Lyon, one-time public printer during Jefferson's administration, died at Cheraw, South Carolina, April 14, 1824, less than two years after the Colonel's death. (Through the courtesy of James B. Lyon, author of The Lyon Family.)

toocracy and Repository of Important Political Truths and other papers and books. The Scourge was established October 1, 1798, and continued but one year.<sup>39</sup> Later in Richmond, Virginia, he collaborated with Callendar in the publication of The Prospect Before Us.<sup>40</sup> Upon Jefferson's election he was appointed public printer in Washington. In 1804 he established at New Orleans, in the newly purchased Louisiana Territory, the first American newspaper of that city. In 1809 he published the first newspaper at Mobile, Alabama. From this period till his death in 1824 at Cheraw, South Carolina, he edited various papers in the southern states, principally in Tennessee and South Carolina. Recently there appeared in a Jacksonville, Florida, paper an interesting article concerning the descendants of James Lyon.<sup>41</sup> Representatives of three generations are now in the employ of a printing establishment in that city; the Lyon family through seven consecutive generations has been active in the printing and publishing profession.<sup>42</sup>

In 1761, Benning Wentworth, royal governor of New Hampshire, issued a charter which opened for settlement new lands in the territory that is now Vermont. In the spring of 1774 Lyon purchased tracts in the township of Wallingford and established a

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Adams, op. cit., p.101.

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Francis P. Wharton, State Trials of the United States (Philadelphia, 1849). See "Trial of Callendar."

41

The Sunday Times Union, Jacksonville, Florida, March 13, 1932.

42

Ibid.

residence thereon about thirty miles from Fort Ticonderoga.<sup>43</sup>

The Allens had preceded Lyon to "The Hampshire Grants," and since the Chittendens went hence in 1774 also,<sup>44</sup> it is probable that the two families migrated together, perhaps with others from Litchfield; for in those days pioneers moved in a colony.

Events in colonial America were fast shaping themselves for the struggle that was to ensue; time, place, and man were never in better accord. Matthew Lyon, free from the shackles of oppression and servitude, was well prepared to light at Crown Point "the first cannon ever fired under the auspices of the American Eagle."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Annals of Congress, Fifth Congress, 1797-1799, I, 1025.

<sup>44</sup> Dictionary of American Biography, Johnson and Malone, editors (New York, 1928- ), IV, 80.

<sup>45</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 498.





JAMES B. LYON AND WIFE IN 1875

James B. Lyon, author of The Lyon Family, is the great great grandson of Colonel Lyon. He resides in Jacksonville, Florida, where he, his son, and his granddaughter are employees in the printing establishment of H. and W. B. Drew Company. His brothers are publishers in Texas and Tennessee. The Lyon family through seven successive generations have carried on the work begun by Colonel Lyon in the 1790's. (Through the courtesy of James B. Lyon, author of The Lyon Family.)



## CHAPTER II

### PUBLIC CAREER IN VERMONT

When Benedict Arnold, on his way to take Fort Ticonderoga in May, 1775, met in the forests near Lake Champlain a rudely equipped group of Green Mountain Boys who had set out for the same destination and for the same purpose, he must have felt chagrined to find the latter group unwilling to submit to his command. Yet recruits were necessary, and so it was decided that the bold, daring backwoodsman, Ethan Allen, and the suave, polished military leader of the Connecticut forces should be in joint command in the attack that was to be made on the English fort. Thus it happened that history was not denied that dramatic, if legendary, demand of surrender, "In the name of the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress!"<sup>1</sup>

No man knew better than Matthew Lyon whether this be truth or fiction, for he, side by side with his redoubtable leader and uncle by marriage, scaled the walls of Ticonderoga that day and aided in capturing eighty cannons and stores of munition,<sup>2</sup> which the English had left there since the close of the French and Indian War, and which were later of incalculable service to Washington.<sup>3</sup> Lyon also accomplished another feat that day; he

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<sup>1</sup> Dictionary of American Biography, Johnson and Malone, editors. (New York, 1928- ), I, 362.

<sup>2</sup> Dictionary of American Biography, I, 362.

<sup>3</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 498.

persuaded many of his countrymen to desert the English cause and enter the ranks of the American army.<sup>4</sup> Such are the effects of the Blarney stone, and Lyon had traveled past York.

In 1774, the same year that Lyon moved to the Hampshire Grants, war with England seeming eminent, and eviction from the Grants being threatened by the "Yorkers," Lyon aided in forming, arming, and disciplining a company of minute men, of which he was a member, in the territory that is now Rutland County, Vermont.<sup>5</sup> This company became a part of Ethan Allen's famous regiment of Green Mountain Boys, and as we have seen, Lyon was with this unit in the spring of 1775. He was also with Allen on the winter expedition in that same year to Canada, where Allen was captured by the British.<sup>6</sup>

On July 17, 1776, Lyon was commissioned second lieutenant in Colonel Seth Warner's Continental Regiment, in the company under the command of Captain John Fasset.<sup>7</sup> During his service in this company an incident occurred which caused Lyon much humiliation then and in later life.

Fasset's company was ordered by Gates to march to Jericho and take post there as a defense for the inhabitants of the Onion River territory.<sup>8</sup> It was an outpost and likely to be

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Bureau of Pensions, Washington, D.C., to writer September 30, 1931.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> John E. Goodrich, Vermont Revolutionary Rolls (Rutland, Vermont, 1924), p. 666.

<sup>8</sup> Annals of Congress, Fifth Congress, 1797-1799, I, 1025.

raided by the Indians. The men of the company were all local recruits and felt that they were being treated unjustly in being sent there sixty miles from the main troops, endangered by the smallness of their unit and the enemy to the rear, and with small chance to render any real service, since the "well-affected" inhabitants had already fled.<sup>9</sup> The post was therefore deserted, and Lyon, acting under the orders of his captain, was sent to carry the news to Gates, who, having already been informed of the action of the company, was in a rage and swore they should all be "broke or hung."<sup>10</sup>

Consequently, on October 16, 1776, the two Captain Fassets, and three lieutenants, Lyon being one of the latter, were tried by a General Court of the Line, Brigadier General St. Clair presiding, for deserting their post on Onion River without orders and without having been attacked or forced by the enemy. They were found guilty of the charges and also "of a breach of the sixth article of war" and were sentenced to

. . . be cashiered, forfeit all their pay, (to be appropriated towards making good the damages sustained by the inhabitants of Onion River on account of their unsoldier-like retreat,) and that they be, and each of them are hereby declared to be incapable of ever hereafter holding any military commissions or employments in the service of the United States of America and that their names and crimes be published in the newspapers.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Others of the company who were tried on the same charges were reduced to the ranks and sentenced to be punished with lashes and an imprisonment of one week, during which time they were to be put to picking oakum.<sup>11</sup>

✓ Lyon explained this affair in a detailed fashion many times, for he was often taunted with having been cashiered. To the facts of the case was added a bit of fiction that Lyon was made to wear a wooden sword, an emblem of cowardice, and escorted out of camp by the band to the tune of "Rogue's March."<sup>12</sup> In his denial of this Lyon says he would never have submitted to such humiliation, "as the implements of death were in my power."<sup>13</sup> The fact that Lyon uses none of his invectives against Gates in his various recountals of the story is sufficient evidence that the commanding general did not subject the young lieutenant to such treatment, and the fearless actions of a lifetime are sufficient warranty of Lyon's lack of cowardice.

Lyon says that he always understood the sentence was reversed,<sup>14</sup> and evidently it was, for the Revolutionary War records show that he was paid seventy-nine and one-sixth dollars in that year for services in Fasset's company from July 16 to December 1,<sup>15</sup> which includes the period he saw service on Onion River

<sup>11</sup> American Archives, Fifth Series, Peter Force, editor, (Washington, 1853), III, 528.

<sup>12</sup> McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

<sup>13</sup> *Annals of Congress*, Fifth Congress, I, 1031.

<sup>14</sup> Letter of Lyon to *Spirit of '76*, Durrett MSS. F446. D8, July 7, 1814.

<sup>15</sup> Goodrich, *op. cit.*, p. 686. Letter from Adjutant General's office, Washington, D. C. to writer, September 8, 1931.

and more than six weeks of service subsequent to the court-martial. Then, too, in the spring of the next year General Schuyler, who was then in command of the Northern Department, writes Warner that he has appointed M. Lyon (Lyon always signed his name thus) as temporary paymaster for Warner's Regiment and has given Lyon all the money he can then spare, \$4000.00.<sup>16</sup> This position entitled Lyon to the rank and pay of captain.<sup>17</sup> Had Schuyler and St. Clair thought Lyon guilty, it is evident he would not have been given a commission of advancement and trust. St. Clair, whom Lyon terms the wisest and oldest of the court, remonstrated against the sentence and recommended Lyon to Schuyler for a position of advancement.<sup>18</sup> This able general was himself to be tried unjustly on a similar charge the next year.

It has been said that Lyon was cashiered for an action deserving of a medal.<sup>19</sup> He always maintained that he left the post with reluctance and under orders of his superiors, after he had exhorted his companions to remain until they were attacked and could then leave in honor.<sup>20</sup> He and his companions may have been the victims of the prejudice Gates was then displaying towards the other generals.<sup>21</sup> It is a well-known fact that the militiamen during the war acted quite frequently against

<sup>16</sup> Schuyler to Warner, July 15, 1777. Quoted by McLaughlin, p. 140.

<sup>17</sup> Reporter, June 14, 1820.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Claude Bowers, Jefferson and Hamilton (Boston, 1926), p. 361.

<sup>20</sup> Annals of Congress, loc. cit.

<sup>21</sup> Dictionary of American Biography, VII, 185.

the orders of the continental officers in command. This incident in Lyon's life, followed as it was by a reinstatement to a position of higher rank, caused no diminution of the high regard his own people in Vermont had for him, for he continued, almost uninterruptedly, to serve the people of his state both in a civil and military capacity till the war was over and until he left for Kentucky in 1801. For his service in this critical period he has rightfully been called "one of the real founders of the Republic."<sup>22</sup>

Lyon served as paymaster of Warner's Regiment from July 14, 1777, till April 1, 1778, when William Sherman of Connecticut, whom he had temporarily replaced, returned.<sup>23</sup> During this period Lyon participated in the retreat from Ticonderoga and the battles of Hubbardtown, Bennington, and Saratoga. When St. Clair, retreating from Ticonderoga, was about to be intercepted by a detachment of Burgoyne's forces and thus prevented from joining Schuyler at Fort Edward, Lyon, by his knowledge of the country, which was home to him, was able to lead St. Clair's men by a circuitous path through the woods and thus prevent their capture.<sup>24</sup> This action of his helped to make victory at Saratoga possible. It was at this time that Lyon first became

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<sup>22</sup>

Braxton, "The Irish in the Revolution" National Republic, March, 1932, p. 25.

<sup>23</sup>

Letter from Adjutant General's Office, Washington, D.C. to writer, September 8, 1931.

<sup>24</sup>

James Wilkinson, Memoirs of My Own Time, 2 Vols. (Philadelphia, 1818), I, 169.



acquainted with a dashing young officer whom he considered "the likeliest young man I ever saw,"<sup>25</sup> but whose later activities, when they were both concerned with Kentucky affairs, drew from Lyon's pen a positive denunciation.<sup>26</sup> For this service to St. Clair and the American Army the young officer, James Wilkinson, praises Lyon highly.<sup>27</sup>

Upon the expiration of Lyon's appointment in the continental army he again entered the Vermont militia, where he could be near and protect his family,<sup>28</sup> and served as a captain in Colonel Ira Allen's regiment.<sup>29</sup> Before the close of the war he was commissioned a colonel in the "Sixteenth Regiment of the Vermont Militia."<sup>30</sup> By this title he was known the remainder of his life. His military record indicates that he was a member of the militia as late as May, 1783.<sup>31</sup> In that year he moved to Fair Haven, Vermont, and his industrial and political affairs precluded any further military service for the rest of his life.<sup>32</sup>

After the battles of Hubbardtown and Bennington the Tories began to flee from the Ticonderoga region. The Vermont Council of Safety voted to confiscate the property of the Tories as a

<sup>25</sup> Jefferson Papers (Library of Congress), August 12, 1801.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., February 22, 1807.

<sup>27</sup> Wilkinson, loc. cit.,

<sup>28</sup> Durrett MSS., F446. D8, July 14, 1814.

<sup>29</sup> Letter from Vermont Adjutant General to writer, Oct., 6, 1931.

<sup>30</sup> Bureau of Pensions, Washington, D. C., to writer, Sept. 30, 1931. None of Lyon's military records show that he received this appointment.

<sup>31</sup> Letter from Vermont Adjutant General, cited above.

<sup>32</sup> Annals of Congress, loc. cit.

means of obtaining funds to supply the militia. Lyon was appointed clerk of the Court of Confiscation, and in the fall of 1777 he, Fassett, and Chittenden moved to Arlington, where they are said to have occupied confiscated Tory homes.<sup>33</sup> Though not an original member of the group that intrigued with Haldimand to unite Vermont to England as her "favorite colony," Lyon was implicated in the matter,<sup>34</sup> perhaps only so far as his official duties necessitated his participation in any settlement made between the Tories and the Vermonsters. Yet when in 1785 the Council of Censors ordered him to turn over the records of the court for inspection, he refused to do so. For this refusal he was impeached and found guilty. He appeared before the court, explained that he had withheld the records because they would implicate certain high officials, and asked for a new trial. The new trial was granted but never took place, and the Governor and Council later ordered the state to pay the cost of the suit. The records have not been found to this day; so how deeply Lyon himself was implicated, if at all, will probably never be known.<sup>35</sup> Ira Allen was the leader of the Haldimand Intrigue, and it was probably he that Lyon was attempting to shield; in both Adams's and Jefferson's administrations Lyon busied himself in getting the State Department to see that Allen's claim against the British

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<sup>33</sup> Adams, History of Fair Haven, p. 417.

<sup>34</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>35</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 178.



government for an illegal seizure of a shipment of arms which Allen had bought in France and was bringing to America was properly settled.<sup>36</sup> Governor Thomas Chittenden, father of Lyon's second wife, was also implicated in the Haldimand affair,<sup>37</sup> and his transactions may have been such that Lyon did not wish to make them public.

In 1778 Lyon was appointed deputy-secretary to the Governor and Council.<sup>38</sup> In each year thereafter till his removal to Fair Haven in 1783, he represented Arlington in the annual legislative assembly,<sup>39</sup> in which position he was appointed to several important committees. When the Connecticut River towns met in Charleston in January, 1781, and asked to be joined to the state of Vermont (Vermont's constitution and plan of organization had been made at the Windsor convention in July, 1777, and began to function with Thomas Chittenden as its first governor in 1778),<sup>40</sup> Lyon was appointed one of a committee of three to represent the legislature and notify these towns that their plans were acceptable and that the union would take place.<sup>41</sup>

In October, 1779, the legislature at Manchester granted to Lyon and others a charter for the town of Fair Haven. This charter was signed by Governor Chittenden at Arlington in April,

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<sup>36</sup> Jefferson Papers.

<sup>37</sup> McLaughlin, op.cit., p.176.

<sup>38</sup> Pliny H. White, Life and Services of Matthew Lyon (Rutland, Vermont, 1858), p. 10.

<sup>39</sup> Adams, op. cit., p. 418.

<sup>40</sup> Adams, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>41</sup> New Hampshire Provisional and State Papers (Concord, 1877), I, 399.

1782;<sup>42</sup> thus Lyon became one of the original proprietors of the town, which was laid out on Poultney River, on the east side of Lake Champlain. In 1780 Lyon helped to survey the tracts and sent out groups of workmen who established quite a town before Lyon and his family moved thence in 1783.<sup>43</sup> Adams's History of Fair Haven, Vermont is chiefly a story of Lyon's activities therein from 1783 till his departure for Kentucky at the end of the century. He was the richest and most active citizen of the town and founded many industries there, including grist mills, a paper factory, a printing shop, a tavern, a tannery and shoe shop, a merchandise store, and forges and slitting mills. Lyon's versatility, his extended travels, his diversified interests, and his broad acquaintance brought him in contact with men of every vocation. Those of special aptitude and ability he encouraged to come to Fair Haven. Farmers, millers, tanners, ministers, teachers, doctors, silversmiths, cobblers, carpenters, bloomers, wheelwrights, and others came to this town from all parts of New England by Lyon's invitation. Especially did his patronage and influence extend to men who, like himself, were of foreign birth or ancestry or Revolutionary War Veterans.<sup>44</sup> These associates of his in this New England patriarchal town were later to be found dispersed and in positions of influence

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<sup>42</sup> Adams, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 418.

<sup>44</sup> Adams, op. cit., passim.

on the American frontier from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico.

Nor did Lyon's efforts cease when he had supplied the material needs of his men and their families; for their mental development, as first trustee of his school district,<sup>45</sup> organized in 1785, he employed as a teacher Tilly Gilbert, who, though he had never enjoyed more than two months schooling himself, "was yet a very good scholar and competent teacher, and wrote finely and correctly."<sup>46</sup> Major Tilly taught in the plank school house Lyon built.<sup>47</sup> The mental and physical wants of his people being supplied, Lyon turned his attention towards supplying their spiritual needs. At the first ecclesiastical meeting of the town organization, Lyon being moderator, it was decided not to divide the town into two "societies."<sup>48</sup> Later a committee was appointed to hire a minister to preach one-half time at Matthew Lyon's and the other half at or near Eleazer Dudley's. A tax of two pence per pound on the list of 1786 was voted to pay the minister. In 1790 the committee was authorized to pay the minister sixty pounds, "in grain, beef, pork, or iron." Who the ministers employed were the records do not show. The first meeting house, which was never plastered or finished and was called the "Lord's Barn" and "Lyon's Den," was built

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45

Ibid., p. 245.

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Ibid., p. 378.

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Ibid., p. 245.

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Adams, op. cit., 257.

mainly by Colonel Lyon about 1791.<sup>49</sup>

There arrived in the "city" about 1788 its first physician, Dr. James Witherell. The doctor, who had served in the Revolution, was a man of considerable reading. He had in his library "several philosophical works of the French atheistical and deistical class, which were quite popular among certain politicians of that day."<sup>50</sup> Witherell and Lyon were friends; the former was congressman from Vermont in 1807 and was later appointed by Jefferson as one of the judges of the Supreme Court of the Territory of Michigan.<sup>51</sup> Whether Witherell influenced Lyon, or Lyon Witherell, or whether they were both directly influenced by the French deists, is not known, but Lyon, after his coming to Kentucky, was known as a deist, though he always encouraged and supported churches and churchgoing.<sup>52</sup> As for himself he minded "the main chance" like the typical Yankee he was.

Lyon built for himself in Fair Haven a "mansion" which later became a tavern; on its site the Vermont Hotel was built at an even later date, Lyon's home being an annex. His country residence, for he was a large landholder, is now the country home of Mr. Zenas H. Ellis, who is an ardent admirer of Lyon, and who has collected many articles of historic value pertaining to Fair Haven's founder.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 274.

<sup>51</sup> Adams, op. cit., p. 490.

<sup>52</sup> Elizabeth Ann Roe, Recollections of Frontier Life (Rockford, Illinois, 1885), p. 20.

<sup>53</sup> "Colonel Matthew Lyon the Founder of Fair Haven, Vt.," The Welsh American Magazine, February, 1932 (New York City), p.1.

Before his departure for Kentucky Lyon deeded to Fair Haven, "for the friendship he bore the town five pieces of land for a meeting house, a cemetery, a townhouse, a school house, and a park."<sup>54</sup> These bequests bespeak the great civic interest Lyon always manifested. Truly he believed in the motto of The Fair Telegraph: "The freedom of the people cannot be supported without knowledge and industry." Lyon was the richest and most influential man in Fair Haven, which was known far and wide as "Lyon's Works."<sup>55</sup>

In the midst of his industrial activities Lyon did not cease to be a politician. As would be supposed, he was in 1783 Fair Haven's first representative to the Vermont assembly. He represented the town ten times in the period 1783 to 1796,<sup>56</sup> at which later time he was elected Congressman from Vermont. Upon Vermont's admission to the Union in 1791 the field of national politics was opened to Lyon for the first time. Without hesitancy he announced as a candidate in the first congressional election of that state and in each succeeding one until he was at last successful in 1796.<sup>57</sup> In the election prior to this, Israel Smith, Lyon's opponent, had won by a majority of twenty-one votes. Lyon claimed the election had not been legally held and presented a petition to the House of Representatives. The committee appointed by that body to examine Lyon's claims in its

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<sup>54</sup> Adams, op. cit., p. 191.

<sup>55</sup> Adams, op. cit., p. 142.

<sup>56</sup> White, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

final report moved a resolution to declare the election null and void, but the House voted down the resolution.<sup>58</sup> However, in 1796 Lyon was at last successful, and he took his seat in Congress at Philadelphia, May 15, 1797, in the special session called by Adams for the purpose of defining our relations with Great Britain and France.<sup>59</sup>

Being an ardent Republican and opposed to aristocracy in any and every form, and at the same time possessing zeal and bravery sufficient to warrant his active participation in the opposition to any measure which did not coincide with his principles of democracy, Lyon was sure to come into conflict with the administrative policies of Adams. Of his entrance into Congress Watson says:

At the beginning of this administration Adams collided with the democratic spirit which Washington had only felt at the close of his. Andrew Jackson had stood against the congressional vote of confidence in Washington; and Matthew Lyon now began a rebellion against the forms and ceremonials Washington had established and which Adams wished to continue.<sup>60</sup>

Lyon began his opposition by asking the House to excuse him from participation in "the boyish piece of business" in which the House as a body paraded through the streets of Philadelphia to the President's home, where the answer to "the king's speech" was delivered and the presidential wine and cake partaken of. Lyon was excused this time, but his second request

<sup>58</sup> Asher C. Hinds, Precedents of the House of Representatives of the United States, 8 Vols. (Washington, 1907), I, p. 987.

<sup>59</sup> Annals of Congress, Fifth Congress, 1797-1799, I, 50.

<sup>60</sup> Watson, op. cit., p. 372.



was voted down;<sup>61</sup> so it was evidently with great satisfaction that Lyon saw this piece of "pageantry" abolished by Jefferson.

The division in the House between the Federalists and the Republicans was very close at this time; Jefferson wrote that it was in equilibrio.<sup>62</sup> Our foreign relations with both Great Britain and France, now at war with each other, was the principal subject of discussion, the Federalists favoring England, and the Republicans, under the influence of Jefferson, favoring France. To get rid of Lyon's vote would aid the administration considerably, not only in actual numbers, but in counteracting his influence on others, for Lyon led the fight of the Republicans against the administration, though Gallatin, Macon, and others were there. It has been said of him at this time that he was "the most energetic, the most self-reliant, one of the most common sense, and when Andrew Jackson was not present, the most impetuous member of Congress."<sup>63</sup>

In February, 1798, occurred the first fight on the floors of congress; Lyon and Roger Griswold, representative from Connecticut, were the contenders. Griswold, a few days prior to the fight, had willfully insulted Lyon by a reference to the wooden sword affair. Lyon ignored the first insult, pretending not to hear, but upon its being repeated, he spat in Griswold's face. A motion to expel Lyon for a breach of privilege failed

<sup>61</sup> Annals of Congress, loc. cit., p. 650.

<sup>62</sup> Writings of Jefferson, 20 vols. (Washington, 1903), IX, 440.

<sup>63</sup> John Bush McMaster, A History of the People of the United States, 8 vols. (New York, 1883-1913), II, 327.

to receive the necessary two-thirds vote, it being clearly shown that the House was not in session at the time of the occurrence, and Lyon wrote a letter of apology to the Speaker. A few days later occurred the fight mentioned. Griswold, as before, was the aggressor, attacking Lyon with a cane as the latter sat at his desk reading his mail. Lyon seized the tongs as a weapon; members of the House separated them. Later in the day Lyon, drinking at a fountain, looked up to see Griswold beside him. He began beating the Connecticut member with his cane. Friends of Griswold brought him a stick, but just then the Speaker called the House to order. A motion to expel them both also failed.<sup>64</sup> A great deal of time was taken up with the trials. Partisan newspapers made the most of the affair, bringing it to the attention of all classes. Madison said it was a "party maneuver of ruining a man whose popularity and activity were feared,"<sup>65</sup> and Jefferson wrote, "to get rid of his vote was the most material object."<sup>66</sup> That the plan was concocted by the Federalists the evidence of the trial clearly shows;<sup>67</sup> but whether it was for the purpose of destroying Lyon's influence, getting rid of his vote, or both, will probably never be known.

This spitting episode, perhaps more than any other action of his life, fixed Lyon in the opinions of many as a barbarous

<sup>64</sup> American State Papers, XX; Miscellaneous I, 166-178.

<sup>65</sup> Writings of James Madison, Guilford Hunt, editor, 9 vols. (New York, 1900- ), VI, 311.

<sup>66</sup> Writings of Jefferson, IX, 440.

<sup>67</sup> Annals of Congress, Fifth Congress, I, 955-1027.



character and justified to a certain extent the lampoons of which he was the subject. Lyon acted deliberately, hoping Griswold would challenge him; but to the latter it was a party and not an individual affair, and when Lyon later challenged him to the field, he did not heed the call.<sup>68</sup> Lyon's colleagues stood by him; Gallatin led in his defense.<sup>69</sup>

Failing in this manner to get rid of Lyon's vote and influence, the Federalists passed on July 14 of that same year the much-controverted Sedition Act. It was aimed at Lyon and his "cubs,"<sup>70</sup> foreign printers, and Lyon was its first victim. On October 9, 1798, he was fined \$1000.00 and sentenced to imprisonment for four months by the federal court held at Rutland, Vermont, Judge Paterson presiding.<sup>71</sup> The indictment consisted of three counts: first, with having maliciously and with intent to stir up sedition written and published in the Vermont Journal a letter containing certain libellous matter against the executive and the government; second, with having published what purported to be a portion of a letter from a diplomatic character in France; and, third, with having aided and abetted the publication of the above-mentioned letter.

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<sup>68</sup> Reporter, June 14, 1820.

<sup>69</sup> John A. Stevens, Albert Gallatin (Boston, 1898), p. 141.

<sup>70</sup> W. A. Robinson, Jeffersonian Democracy in New England (New Haven, Connecticut, 1918), p. 27.

<sup>71</sup> Francis P. Wharton, State Trials of the United States (Philadelphia, 1849), p. 355 ff. No records of this trial are to be found. Wharton was forced to get his account from partisan newspapers.

The letter mentioned in the first charge was written and postmarked at Philadelphia on July 7, prior to the passage of the Sedition Act, which had had its first reading July 5; the second letter was written by the poet Joel Barlow, then minister to France, to his brother-in-law, Abraham Baldwin, congressman from Georgia, who permitted Lyon to copy it "to shew to our friends." Portions of this letter had been published in pamphlet form; Lyon produced witnesses who stated that he had been opposed to the publication and that the copy in his absence had been obtained from his wife. The language and charges of both letters in question would be considered mild in a political campaign of today.

Lyon acted as his own counsel in the case and stated his defense in three points:

. . . first that the court had no jurisdiction of the offense, the act of congress having been unconstitutional and void, if not so generally, at least as to writings composed before its passage; second that the publication was innocent; and third that its contents were true.

On the first two points he offered no testimony, but on the third he called on the presiding judge to testify whether he had not frequently "dined with the President and observed his ridiculous pomp and parade." Despite the oddity of this proceeding, the judge replied that he had often dined with President Adams, but instead of pomp and parade had witnessed a great deal of plainness and simplicity. Next Lyon inquired of the judge if he had not seen at the President's more pomp and ceremony than at the Rutland tavern. To this

question the judge deigned no reply, but merely "smoked a cigar."

Paterson is said to have instructed the jury to find Lyon guilty on a general charge, stating that notwithstanding the fact that the letter had been written and mailed at a date prior to the passage of the act under the terms of which the defendant was being tried, still the accused, being a member of Congress at that time, must have known that the act was likely to be passed and was therefore guilty.<sup>72</sup>

Found guilty and given a heavy sentence, Lyon was taken to Vergennes and placed in jail, where he complained loudly of the hardships he was subjected to, and from whence he continued his attacks on the administration. While still in jail he was re-elected to Congress by a large majority. Lyon was now almost insolvent (Judge Paterson had investigated Lyon's financial standing before he pronounced sentence), and the raising of \$1000.00 to pay the fine before February 9, 1799, the date of the expiration of the jail term, presented a difficult problem. Lyon arranged for a lottery, the prizes of which were to be his remaining houses and lands, and at the same time his Republican friends of the South busied themselves in raising funds to pay his fine.<sup>73</sup> The Federalists, enjoying his enforced absence, planned to rearrest him for his continued attacks on the government, but the subject of their plots was aware of his constitutional rights, and when the prison doors swung open on February

<sup>72</sup> Kiles Weekly Register, December 5, 1818.

<sup>73</sup> Bowers, op. cit., p. 386; Adams, op. cit., p. 113.



REV. MASON R. LYON AND WIFE

Mason R. Lyon, grandson of Colonel Matthew Lyon and eldest son of James Lyon, was born at Fair Haven, Vermont, November 12, 1798, while Colonel Lyon was in jail at Vergennes. He was christened Risley by his parents, but at Colonel Lyon's request Mason was added to his name in honor of Stephen Thompson Mason, United States Senator from Virginia, who aided in collecting funds to pay the Colonel's fine of \$1000. (Through the courtesy of James B. Lyon, author of The Lyon Family.)

9, he shouted, "I'm on my way to Philadelphia."<sup>74</sup>

Truly has it been said that the eyes of the nation were on that little cell in Vermont; and it was no Rogue's March now that met his ears. He was escorted in triumph to Bennington, where he was feted.<sup>75</sup> His Republican friends in Congress greeted him joyously, and the Federalists, still persevering in their efforts to rid themselves of his "beastly" presence, introduced a motion to expel him as a convicted felon.<sup>76</sup> For the third time they failed, and the indignities they were thrusting upon Lyon were only strengthening him for the part he was to play in causing their defeat in 1801, when despite offers of money or office,<sup>77</sup> he consistently supported Jefferson on every ballot in the contested presidential election of that year till his candidate was elected by Lyon's vote, on the thirty-sixth ballot.<sup>78</sup> Later, when he found himself no longer able to support Jefferson's administrative policies, Lyon is reported to have remarked, "I made, and I can unmake him."<sup>79</sup> For Lyon's part in this election he has, with perhaps more truth than has been realized, been called the savior of his country. Personalities play such an important part in political machinations that it is an almost impossible task to ascertain definitely just what

<sup>74</sup> White, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>75</sup> Bowers, op. cit., p. 388.

<sup>76</sup> Annals of Congress, Fifth Congress, III, 2954.

<sup>77</sup> Reporter, November 24, 1819.

<sup>78</sup> W. O. Lynch, Fifty Years of Party Warfare (Indianapolis, 1931), p. 132.

<sup>79</sup> White, op. cit., p. 23.

influence is the determining factor in the break-up of any political deadlock. Usually, it is the result of many changes effected by compromise. The chat that Gouverneur Morris had with Jefferson that day on the Capitol steps probably had something to do with his nephew's absenting himself from the halls of Congress, permitting Lyon to cast Vermont's vote for Jefferson, thus insuring his election.<sup>80</sup> Bayard claims Jefferson was elected as a result of an "understanding" between Jefferson and the Federalists. Certain it is that Jefferson did not receive a single Federalist vote,<sup>81</sup> although many of this party did withdraw after the thirty-fifth ballot. Bayard cast a blank vote on the thirty-sixth and last ballot for his state, Delaware.

Lyon of his own volition chose not to stand for re-election in Vermont, for he had already chosen a site on the "Western waters" for a new home where the famous resolutions of 1798 assured him immunity from arrest for expressions of his political ideas, and where free land, rich soil, and navigable waters, and an almost virgin field for the exercise of his political ambitions lured him on. At exactly "fifty-nine minutes before one A. M. March 4, 1801,"<sup>82</sup> he penned his farewell epistle to his bitterest enemy, John Adams. How gladly he must have written that salutation, "Fellow Citizen," realizing fully its significance—the party which had "persecuted" him was "now happily

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<sup>80</sup> Bowers, op. cit., p. 505.

<sup>81</sup> Dictionary of American Biography, II, 65.

<sup>82</sup> "Lyon's letter to Adams," Historical Magazine, XXII, 360, (December, 1873).

humbled in dust and ashes," but unlike the Phoenix it was to rise no more.

So the two departed from Washington; Adams to return to Quincy, where he was to spend many years in vain regrets, and Lyon for Kentucky, where relatives and friends , comprising quite a "Yankee Colony," then awaited him in the valley of the Cumberland.





THE ABOVE PICTURE, COPIED FROM A BOOK WRITTEN BY COLONEL MATTHEW LYON'S DAUGHTER, MRS. ELIZABETH ANN ROE, PURPORTS TO BE A SCENE OF THE LANDING OF THE COLONEL AND MRS. LYON, AT WHAT IS NOW EDDYVILLE, KY., IN 1801.

From Aunt Leanna, or Early Scenes in Kentucky.  
 (Through the courtesy of James B. Lyon, author  
 of The Lyon Family.)

## CHAPTER III

## A FRONTIERSMAN IN PIONEER KENTUCKY

The boom of a cannon, relic of the Revolutionary War, broke the stillness of a summer day in a region of Kentucky that had not known such sound before, a region which had not been open for settlement, except to soldiers, until within four years previous to the time mentioned.<sup>1</sup> Matthew Lyon at the end of a long journey, overland and by water, from the vicinity of Lake Champlain thus announced his arrival in Eddyville, Kentucky, at noon June 15, 1801.<sup>2</sup> Here relatives and friends whom he had not seen for many months gathered to meet him as his keelboat (he had changed from a flatboat at the mouth of the Cumberland) touched the banks of the Cumberland. He landed beneath a large sycamore that grew near an immense cave, from which flowed a fine spring. This more than any other one factor had determined Lyon's choice of this place for a permanent location.<sup>3</sup>

Greetings being exchanged, the absence of a loved one was noted; Lorrain, youngest daughter by Lyon's first marriage, whom he had last seen in youthful health and happiness, now slept in her lonely grave on a shady, beautiful eminence overlooking the

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<sup>1</sup> W. R. Jillson, Kentucky Land Grants (Louisville, 1925), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Jefferson Papers, August 12, 1801.

<sup>3</sup> Roe, Aunt Leanna, p. 16.

village. Since there were no direct mail routes through Eddyville at this time,<sup>4</sup> Lyon was until his arrival unaware of his daughter's death, which had occurred in October of the previous year.<sup>5</sup>

From Eddyville, "40 miles up the Cumberland," Lyon wrote a lengthy, newsy letter to Jefferson on August 12, scarcely two months after his arrival. In this letter he tells of his arrival, of the illness of the family, occasioned by the long trip on the river during the hot season, and of the death of Beulah, the baby girl, five years of age. Wilkinson had already been an overnight guest at Eddyville on his way from Wilkinsonville to Knoxville, where he, General Davie, and Mr. Hawkins were to treat with the Indians for a purchase of lands east of the Tennessee River. Lyon in this letter expresses a hope that the lands west of the Tennessee, which were not then open to settlement except to soldiers of the "Virginia line," would at the same time be treated for. He also expresses a fear that Indian depredations will increase in his vicinity if the United States troops, then stationed at Wilkinsonville and Fort Massac were removed, an event which General Dearborne in a conversation with Lyon had indicated might happen. In this same letter Lyon discusses the settlers he found in the region in which he had settled, saying that they were for the most

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<sup>4</sup> Jefferson Papers, August 12, 1801.

<sup>5</sup> Roe, Aunt Leanna, p. 24.

part a "kind of Arab" from the back parts of the Carolinas.<sup>6</sup>

It is from this letter that we learn definitely that Lyon had been in Eddyville before 1801; he tells Jefferson, "I . . . have had to go through a seasoning here last year . . . ."<sup>7</sup> This may have been Lyon's fourth trip to Kentucky, although his being a representative from Vermont prevented his locating permanently in Eddyville till after March 4, 1801. After the close of Congress March 4, 1799, he is said to have made a prospecting trip through the Northwest Territory, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia.<sup>8</sup> In the fall of that same year he accompanied his older children, James excepted, and their families to Eddyville, where he helped to build three houses and set up a sawmill before his return east.<sup>9</sup> Then, as is seen from the letter, he had been in Eddyville at some time in 1800. It is no wonder that he wrote Jefferson in the same letter, "The fatigue of traveling kept me down till after your decisive election." Like some of our present-day solons, Lyon did not hesitate to be absent from Congress if his business demanded his attention elsewhere. He says that the only two faults ever found with his congressional career were that he was often tardy in attendance, and that he opposed the Embargo.<sup>10</sup> That he regarded Eddyville

<sup>6</sup> Jefferson Papers, August 12, 1801.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> White, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> Reynolds, op. cit., p. 277. Roe, Aunt Leanna, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Reporter, February 18, 1818.

as his home even before his coming in July, 1801, is shown by a statement in his speech on the Sedition Act in January of that year, when he said, "I now reside in a country where there is no danger of political persecution."<sup>11</sup>

When Lyon arrived in Eddyville in 1801, he found there a growing, thriving village. In 1800 this place ranked twenty-fourth among Kentucky towns and had a population of sixty-nine.<sup>12</sup> With Lyon's coming the next year this number was greatly increased, for he brought with him several families from Vermont.<sup>13</sup>

Chittenden Lyon in a letter to Judge Witherell in 1828 makes mention of a number of those who either accompanied or followed his father to Kentucky.<sup>14</sup> Among these were the great-grandparents of Irvin S. Cobb, Gideon D. Cobb and Modena Clark, Lyon's niece.<sup>15</sup> This letter, together with the early records of Livingston County, helps to establish the date of Lyon's coming, which has been the subject of much controversy; for on November 6, 1800, when a definite plan for the town of Eddyville was decided upon by the county court, Gideon D. Cobb was appointed one of the five trustees selected for the town.<sup>16</sup>

All published accounts of Lyon state that he was the founder of Eddyville; this is not true. When Eddyville was first settled is not known. Michaux slept there at the Great Eddy on the night of December 22, 1795, but he does not make mention of any

<sup>11</sup> Annals of Congress, Sixth Congress, 1799-1801. p. 974.

<sup>12</sup> Perrin, Battle, Kniffin, Kentucky, A History of the State (Louisville, 1887), p. 286.

<sup>13</sup> Roe, Aunt Leanna, p. 18.

<sup>14</sup> Adams, op. cit., p. 425.

<sup>15</sup> Irvin S. Cobb to writer, April 22, 1932.

<sup>16</sup> Livingston County Court Records, Book A, p. 58.

inhabitants.<sup>17</sup> The earliest record of Eddyville that the writer has been able to find, which from its wording indicates that it is perhaps the earliest official record of the town, bears the date of December 19, 1798, at which time an act of the General Assembly of Kentucky, providing for the establishment of an inspection of "tobacco, hemp, and flour on the lands of David Walker, at a place called Eddyville, on the Cumberland River, to be called and known by the name of Eddyville," was approved.<sup>18</sup> Thus before Lyon's first coming in 1799 the town was established and named, but before it was first laid out and the streets named, in the fall of 1800, Lyon had arrived in Kentucky with his first contingent of settlers, and one of these, as we have seen, became one of the town's first trustees.

In August, 1801, Lyon purchased from David Walker and his wife Polly, the tract of land on which the town of Eddyville stands, including the greater majority of the lots already laid out but not yet sold.<sup>19</sup> In 1801 the listed value of all town lots in Livingston County was \$3325.00; Lyon's lots were listed at \$2820.00.<sup>20</sup> After 1801 Lyon was known as the proprietor of the town,<sup>21</sup> but he cannot be said to be the founder. To David

<sup>17</sup> R. G. Thwaites, editor, Early Western Travels, 1748-1846, 32 vols. (Cleveland, 1904-1907), III, 81.

<sup>18</sup> William Littell, Acts of Kentucky, 5 vols. (Frankfort, 1810), II, 213.

<sup>19</sup> Livingston County Court Record Book A, p. 108.

Caldwell County Deed Book A, p. 463.

<sup>20</sup> Livingston County Tax List, 1801. In Possession of Kentucky State Historical Society, Frankfort.

<sup>21</sup> Livingston County Deed Book A, pp. 103 ff.



Walker must be accorded that honor, of whatever value it may be. Yet from his arrival in 1801 till his departure for Arkansas in 1820 Lyon was by far the most important and influential man in Eddyville, and as Collins says, "the most important character in Southwestern Kentucky."<sup>22</sup>

To David Walker also must be given the credit of fixing Eddyville as the first county seat of Livingston, another event for which Lyon has been given credit.<sup>23</sup> An act of the General Assembly of Kentucky approved December 13, 1798, six days earlier than the act establishing an inspection and a name for Eddyville, provided for the division of Christian County and the establishment of Livingston. The act provided that a ballot be taken on the fourth Tuesday in May, 1799, by the justices of the peace to be appointed for the new county to decide upon a "permanent seat of justice."<sup>24</sup> The balloting occurred August 27, 1799, when a majority was found in favor of Eddyville.<sup>25</sup> In November, 1799, Walker presented a writing to the court, offering two acres of land, \$500.00 in work and material for the necessary buildings, and free ferriage on court and muster days, if Eddyville be selected as the County Seat.<sup>26</sup> In December,

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<sup>22</sup> Collins, Kentucky, II, 491

<sup>23</sup> Roe, Aunt Leanna, p. 49.

<sup>24</sup> Littell, op. cit., II, 199.

<sup>25</sup> Livingston County Court Record, Book A, p. 15.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 20.



1801, he presents a receipt for the \$500.00 and makes oath that he has not given any gifts to members of the bench to influence their votes for Eddyville.<sup>27</sup>

Thus when Lyon arrived in Eddyville in 1801, he found the town and county established, and some of his followers already chosen as officers. Lyon doubtless exerted his influence to attain these things, but to what extent cannot be determined.

Several factors unquestionably played a part in determining Lyon's emigration from Vermont to Kentucky. The political situation was one: Vermont was divided between the Federalists and the Republicans, whereas in Kentucky the latter were in control. Jefferson was wise enough to see that Lyon's going into a new region with his enthusiasm and policy of "thorough," in-so-far as keeping the people informed was concerned, would be of vast importance to the cause of his party. In 1798 and 1799 he had requested Lyon to send a Republican printer down to Staunton.<sup>28</sup> A nephew of Lyon's was sent, but this enterprise ended in a financial failure after a few months. At Louisville early in 1801 was established that city's first newspaper, The Farmer's Library, under the editorship of Samuel Vail, Lyon's erstwhile neighbor in Vermont.<sup>29</sup> It was published on Lyon's press, which was loaned "gratis" to the editor. In July, 1802, Vail writes a letter home, saying that Lyon has acted unfairly,

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 135, 136.

<sup>28</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 502.

<sup>29</sup> W. H. Perrin, The Pioneer Press of Kentucky, 1782-1830 (Louisville, 1885), p. 28. Littell, op. cit., II, 422.

that he promised the free use of the press for ten years, but now says it must be returned or paid for after two years.<sup>30</sup>

This publication, the name of which was the same as that of a paper Lyon had published in Vermont as early as 1793, lasted till 1808. Vail later went to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where his sister and her two children, members of Lyon's Vermont colony at Eddyville, joined him. Here they all died before

1828.<sup>31</sup> This press of Lyon's, on which the famous Scourge was printed and which has been inaccurately stated was the first printing press in Kentucky,<sup>32</sup> was in the hands of Matthew Duncan at Russellville in 1812.<sup>33</sup> It was probably this press that Duncan used in establishing the first newspaper in Illinois Territory at Kaskaskia in 1809, which Reynolds says was "a great lever to make known the advantages of Illinois."<sup>34</sup>

Then, too, Lyon possessed all the traits of a true pioneer. According to Roosevelt, this seems an innate characteristic of the Irish, who, more than any other nationality, advanced the American frontier.<sup>35</sup> The Green River Country, in which Lyon located, was first opened for settlement to all in 1797, and large grants began immediately to be made. The Lyon family grants in this region amounted to 3598 acres from March 11, 1799, when the first grant of 200 acres was made to Beulah Lyon, to

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<sup>30</sup> Perrin, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>31</sup> Adams, op. cit., p. 425.

<sup>32</sup> White, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>33</sup> Caldwell County Deed Book A, pp. 463-470.

<sup>34</sup> Reynold's, op. cit., p. 310.

<sup>35</sup> Fairfax Braxton, "The Irish in Our Revolution," National Republic, March, 1932, p. 39.

November 12, 1806, when 400 acres were granted to Chittenden Lyon.<sup>36</sup> In 1802 Lyon's grants and purchases from other grantees totaled 5428 acres.<sup>37</sup>

It has been claimed that Andrew Jackson influenced Lyon to come to Kentucky, and that he was a frequent visitor to Eddyville.<sup>38</sup> Stephen Thompson Mason, the Republican senator from Virginia, whose ardor was responsible for the first publication of Jay's treaty, and who collected and carried to Vergennes the \$1000.00 contribution to pay Lyon's fine, was an excellent friend of Lyon's.<sup>39</sup> His home in Virginia was a refuge for the printers whom the Sedition Act sought to punish. Lyon spent some time there after Jefferson's inaugural in 1801.<sup>40</sup> The fact that Mason and Lyon held a large tract of land together in Kentucky seems to indicate that Mason's influence was not a negligible factor in determining Lyon's choice,<sup>41</sup> which was perhaps the result of all these factors plus the immunity from arrest secured by the Kentucky Resolutions and the industrial and natural advantages of the site chosen.

In Eddyville, as at Fair Haven, Lyon set about developing the trading post he found there into an industrial center. He is said to have established a sawmill there on his first trip in 1799. Later he became a merchant and sold "boughten" goods

<sup>36</sup> W. R. Jillson, op. cit., p. 357.

<sup>37</sup> Livingston County Tax List, 1802.

<sup>38</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 411.

<sup>39</sup> Lyon's letter to Mason, Wharton, op. cit., pp. 333 ff.

<sup>40</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 411.

<sup>41</sup> Caldwell County Wills Book A, p. 58.

to the inhabitants, who at first feared they should be cheated by "them thar pleggy Yankees, who lived in fine housen made outen boards and shingles."<sup>42</sup> He built forges and wrote to Fair Haven for bloomers and refiners.<sup>43</sup> He also established a tannery, a grist mill, a tin and blacksmith shop and had various stills operating in different sections of the Green River Country.<sup>44</sup>

A Yankee merchant living on a waterway in the midst of timber and iron ore would naturally turn to shipbuilding and supply himself with carriers for his own cargoes. This Lyon did. His ship yard was the only one to be found from Nashville to New Orleans,<sup>45</sup> and Eddyville soon became famed for its shipbuilding industry. Dr. John R. Bedford, in his "Tour in 1807 down the Cumberland," has left the only contemporary view of Lyon's yards. In the latter part of January he passed Eddyville on his way from Nashville to New Orleans and made the following memorandum:

. . . Eddyville some distance lower on the North bank is in the state of Kentucky, Livingston County,— and remarkable only for ship-building which is carried on with some spirit,—3 schooners being on the stocks of about 160 tons, one launched & nearly finished — the other two not in such forwardness. — also two Gun Boats for the U. States, under the superintendence of Matt. Lyon. — Two others were completed at this place and forwarded on in November last.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Roe, Aunt Leanna, pp. 27 ff.

<sup>43</sup> Adams, op. cit., p. 112.

<sup>44</sup> Caldwell County Deed Book A, pp. 463 ff.

<sup>45</sup> Manuscript Records, Navy Department, Lyon to Hambleton, November 17, 1812.

<sup>46</sup> John R. Bedford, "A Tour in 1807 Down the Cumberland," edited by W. A. Provine, Tennessee Historical Magazine, April, 1919, p. 50.

It has long been regarded as a fact that Lyon built gunboats for the United States government during the War of 1812, and that he suffered a financial failure as a result of this adventure.<sup>47</sup> One writer says that Lyon had the contract and built the boats, two of which were sunk in the Mississippi and the others captured by the British, Lyon suffering the entire loss, since the delivery of the boats to the government was not effected.<sup>48</sup> The writer has been unable to find any data to substantiate these statements.

The manuscript records of the Navy Department show that Bedford was correct. Lyon did have a contract, agreed to by the Secretary of the Navy, March 16, 1805, to build and deliver to New Orleans "2 Gunboats on the terms proposed by you." Another contract for two more gunboats was entered into the next year before the first two were delivered at New Orleans. For these boats Lyon was paid \$1600.00 each.<sup>49</sup>

Early in 1808 congress passed an act prohibiting representatives and senators from entering into contracts with the government. It is interesting to note that Lyon refrained from voting on this bill in its final stage.<sup>50</sup> This bill, of course, precluded any further contracts of Lyon with the government as long as he was in congress. On February 29, 1808, Lyon wrote

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<sup>47</sup> Collins, op. cit., II, 492.

<sup>48</sup> James Gilmer Speed, "A Vigorous Politician of the Olden Times," Harpers, vol. 88, pp. 698, ff. (April, 1894).

<sup>49</sup> Office of Naval Records and Library, Navy Department, to writer, September 9, 1931.

<sup>50</sup> Annals of Congress, Tenth Congress, First Session, 1807-1808, II, 1722.

the Secretary of the Navy stating that Elijah Galusha (Lyon's step-son) would like to build boats for the government in the same yards and by the same workmen Lyon had used.<sup>51</sup> Smith answered Lyon that considering the spirit of the Contract Bill, he would prefer not to have any correspondence with any member of Congress in relation to a contract either with himself or with a friend.<sup>52</sup>

No further correspondence occurred till November 27, 1812, when Lyon addresses to Paul Hambleton, then Secretary, a lengthy letter describing a boat which he thinks will be effective against the British and offering to construct the woodwork of such a boat at \$2000.00 each, or to furnish the army with pork at sixteen dollars per barrel and beef at thirteen dollars.<sup>53</sup> The records do not show that this letter was ever answered, and there is no record of more than the four gunboats contracted for. Lyon wrote to the Department in 1808, enclosing the receipt for the last two gunboats built by him.<sup>54</sup> It thus seems hardly possible to charge Lyon's financial reverses in 1812 to the government's lack of payment or to his being employed by the government.

At his yards in Eddyville Lyon built not only sea-going vessels but boats of every description. The Nashville Impartial

<sup>51</sup> Manuscript Records, Navy Department, Lyon to Secretary.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., Smith to Lyon, March 1, 1808.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., Lyon to Hambleton, November 27, 1812.

<sup>54</sup> Office of Naval Records and Library, Navy Department, to writer, September 9, 1931.



Review of March 21, 1807, has this notice:

The brig Melinda was launched at Eddyville on Friday (28 ult.) and will set sail in a few days for New Orleans. She is a handsome vessel of 150 tons, the property of Messrs. Bullock and Ficklin of this town. (Copied from a paper published at Russellville, Kentucky.)<sup>55</sup>

On November 29, 1806, Lyon sells to William Sprague for \$1500 the vessel then being built. Sprague gives his note for \$500 and Joseph Ficklin's order for \$1000 on his merchants in Philadelphia for the balance.<sup>56</sup> Ficklin was Russellville's first postmaster, and he and Lyon were friends.<sup>57</sup> He may have operated Lyon's book store in Russellville.<sup>58</sup>

Lyon's oldest son, James, came to Eddyville and began to operate a shipyard just below that of his father. Colonel Lyon in 1805 writes that this son is getting rich,<sup>59</sup> but in April, 1806, James is forced to give a first mortgage on "a ship built at Eddyville in the lower ship yards" to three of his workmen. This mortgage is of interest in that it reveals the wages paid the workmen, \$1.50 per day.<sup>60</sup> In November, 1805, James Lyon sold to Joseph Ficklin of Russellville for \$4000 two thirds of a boat then building at Eddyville, the other third being claimed by William Sprague and the master workmen thereon.<sup>61</sup> The

<sup>55</sup> Bedford, "A Tour in 1807 Down the Cumberland," loc.cit.

<sup>56</sup> Livingston County Deed Book A. p. 264.

<sup>57</sup> Alex C. Finley, History of Russellville and Logan County (Russellville, Ky., 1879), I, 38.

<sup>58</sup> "Memoirs of Micah Taul," Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society, January, 1929.

<sup>59</sup> Adams, op. cit., p. 112.

<sup>60</sup> Livingston County Deed Book A, p. 204.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 217.



records of Caldwell County are mute evidence of the failure of James Lyon in the shipbuilding industry, showing that his property was sold to pay his debts.<sup>62</sup> James did not stay in Eddyville long; his talents belonged to the newspaper field.

When Lyon's financial crash came in 1812, his shipyards were still in operation; he deeded to his son Chittenden two keel boats, the Fair Trader and the Matilda, and his part in a vessel then in the stocks.<sup>63</sup>

The invention of the steamboat, the Embargo, and the War of 1812, which increased manufacturing in New England, meant destruction for Lyon's inland ship industry. Like the loom, the spinning wheel, and countless other things of the colonial era, it was replaced by a counterpart of greater efficiency, and Lyon's financial condition at this period precluded his entrance into the steamboat industry.

The development of mail routes in the Western Country gave Lyon an opportunity for acquiring his first contracts with the government. In the period 1800 to 1808 he had contracts for at least six routes in the West: from Cincinnati to Detroit; from Marietta to Cincinnati; from Russellville to Eddyville; from Hartford, Kentucky, to Fort Massac, Illinois; from Fort Massac to new Madrid; from Kaskaskia to Girardeau and from Cahokia to St. Louis; and from Nashville to Natchez.<sup>64</sup> These

<sup>62</sup> Caldwell County Deed Book A., p. 361.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 663, ff.

<sup>64</sup> Annals of Congress, Eighth Congress, Second Session, 1804-1805, pp. 1121 ff.

contracts were made with Habersham and Granger. The route from Cincinnati to Detroit paid \$105.60 annually; the Hartford-Fort Massac route, about 190 miles long, paid \$654.75; the Russellville-Eddyville route \$240; and the fifth contract mentioned above was for \$515.<sup>65</sup> For the Marietta-Cincinnati and the Nashville-Natchez routes the writer has been unable to find the contract prices. Considering the ferriage to be paid and the lack of transportation facilities in those days, it is likely that Lyon was accurate in his estimate that he realized but little profit on some of the routes and lost on others.<sup>66</sup>

The Nashville-Natchez route was organized in 1800, when the mail was carried only once per month. In 1801 Habersham awarded Lyon the contract, the route to be made fortnightly, and wrote John Steele, Secretary of the Mississippi Territory, that he hoped the citizens of Natchez would have no further cause for complaint, as Lyon was "pretty active."<sup>67</sup> This route followed the old Natchez Trace, which Michaux describes as "only a path that serpentine through these boundless forests."<sup>68</sup> Lyon, of course, sublet the routes, though his horses were often used, and likely his men made most of the routes. Lyon, however, often traveled over many of the routes himself, especially the Eddyville-Russellville route, and his return from New

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Julian P. Eletz, "Early Land Communication with Mississippi Valley," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, vol. 13, pp. 1-30 (June, 1926).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., quoted by Eletz, p. 7.

Orleans, to which place he made frequent commercial trips by flatboat, was made via the Natchez Trace. James Lyon was postmaster at Fair Haven in 1798,<sup>69</sup> and Matthew Lyon, Junior, occupied the same position at Eddyville in 1818;<sup>70</sup> thus it will be seen that Matthew Lyon played no insignificant part in this branch of the executive administration. In his first letter from Eddyville to Jefferson he calls attention to the need of a further development of the mail service in the West, saying that he has already written the postmaster general concerning improvements necessary and expedient for mail transportation in his vicinity and hinting that a word from "the great house" might be helpful.<sup>71</sup>

Lyon is said to have brought with him from Vermont in 1801 the tools and machinery necessary to establish a sawmill, a grist mill, and his shipyard. In addition he brought a large stock of dry goods and merchandise.<sup>72</sup> His outstanding indebtedness of nearly \$28000 to mercantile houses in New York, Alexandria, Georgetown, and other places indicates something of the extent of his mercantile business and commercial activities on the Cumberland, the Ohio, and the Mississippi in those early days of Kentucky's statehood. In boats of his own construction cargoes of the products of western Kentucky, including hemp, tobac-

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<sup>69</sup> Adams, op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>70</sup> Draper MSS. 6CC 77, p.4.

<sup>71</sup> Jefferson Papers, August 12, 1801

<sup>72</sup> Roe, Aunt Leanna, p. 26.

co, flour, pork, and beef, and possibly iron from Lyon's forges and pottery from his factory, together with numerous other articles, left Eddyville, bound for New Orleans, New York, or other Atlantic and Gulf ports. Lyon was proud of his being a merchant; in Vermont he had announced as a candidate for Congress as "the representative of the commercial, agricultural, and manufacturing interests in preference to any of their law characters."<sup>73</sup> In his speech in Congress on the Yazoo question he says that he has made and lost a great deal of property as a merchant, and that it is all the same to him whether he contracts with an individual or with the public.<sup>74</sup> He is said to have been worth \$50,000 in 1812—quite a fortune for those days. In that year, early in the summer, was completed and launched at Eddyville the schooner Beulah Lyon, the finest and largest boat of her kind Lyon had ever built. On the day of her launching the Colonel is said to have given a public dinner, to which the whole neighborhood was invited. Amid music and gayety was launched the schooner, the loss of which was to mean much to her owner. Loaded with pork and beef, she started on her way to New Orleans, but she grounded on a sand bar after entering the Mississippi, and on account of the hot weather the meat was spoiled; thus the cargo on which Lyon seems to have staked so much was entirely lost.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Adams, op. cit., p. 96.

<sup>74</sup> Annals of Congress, Seventh Congress, Second Session, 1804-1805, pp. 1121 ff.

<sup>75</sup> Roe, Aunt Leanna, p. 198.

At New Orleans on June 16, 1812, he deeds to his son Chittenden, who assumes his father's indebtedness, the whole of his possessions.<sup>76</sup> Upon his return to Eddyville he makes, on September 12, another deed, which enumerates in detail the vast amount of property transferred, including his houses, lands, cattle, horses, negroes, stocks of merchandise, outstanding accounts, warehouses, and their contents, shipyards and ships, tools, machinery, stills, mills, printing press and books (in Russellville), town lots, interest in the pottery and stone-ware manufacturing, and all his household and personal belongings, including "the brown horse and a saddle and bridle I rode home from Natchez." For this exchange Chittenden pays his father \$2000 cash and assumes his father's indebtedness to the extent of \$15,700.<sup>77</sup> Later a suit was brought against Lyon's estate for a debt of nearly \$10,000 to Benjamin W. Rogers and Company of New York.<sup>78</sup> This debt was incurred in 1809, but no mention is made of it in the deed of transfer. The records of Caldwell County show that Chittenden made land transfers in payment of his father's debts to his creditors.<sup>79</sup>

South of the Mason and Dixon line Lyon was confronted by a new problem, economic and social. He had helped to form Vermont's constitution, which prohibited life servitude, and his own experience would naturally cause him to be opposed to slav-

<sup>76</sup> Caldwell County Deed Book A, p. 442.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 463-470.

<sup>78</sup> Caldwell County Deed Book D, pp. 30, 32.

<sup>79</sup> Caldwell County Deed Book B, pp. 177, 179, 220, et al.  
Deed Book D, pp. 30, 32, et al.

ery. Yet before he had been in Kentucky long, he became a slaveholder.<sup>80</sup> Mrs. Roe's Aunt Leanna is a story of how this evil was forced upon the Lyons against their wishes, and of how negroes were bought from masters who mistreated them, and from auctioneers who would separate families in order to make a profitable sale. These slaves were paid a regular wage, and when they had worked long enough to pay their purchase prices, they were emancipated. According to Mrs. Roe Aunt Leanna and her two children were purchased by Lyon for \$1200 at Georgetown<sup>81</sup> and sent home by a neighbor who was just leaving that place for Eddyville. Aunt Leanna, Mrs. Roe says, was set free at the Colonel's death, being with him when he died in Arkansas. Other negroes were bought and later set free.

The tax list of Livingston County for 1802 shows that Lyon owned in that year three blacks above sixteen years of age and a total of twelve slaves.<sup>82</sup> In 1810 he declares his intention of freeing his negro man George,<sup>83</sup> and in October, 1812, after he has suffered his most severe financial crisis, he issues a deed of emancipation for Dick;<sup>84</sup> both of these acts are corroborative of Mrs. Roe's statements. The deed of September, 1812, by which Lyon transfers all his property to Chittenden, includes ten slaves, three women and their children.<sup>85</sup> Mrs. Roe maintains

<sup>80</sup> Livingston County Tax list, 1812.

<sup>81</sup> Roe, Aunt Leanna, p. 127.

<sup>82</sup> In possession of Kentucky State Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky.

<sup>83</sup> Caldwell County Order Book A, p. 72.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>85</sup> Caldwell County Deed Book A, pp. 463-470.



that it was the welfare of these negroes, to whom Lyon had promised freedom, that caused him to deed his property to his son.<sup>86</sup>

In January, 1805, Lyon writes Witherell that he needs a good bloomer and refiner to teach the negroes the work of the forges he is going to establish that year.<sup>87</sup> This seems in direct contrast to the idea Lyon expresses the next month on the floors of Congress in his philippic against Randolph, whom he charges with "having inherited the life services of a numerous train of the human species."<sup>88</sup> Such were the inconsistencies of belief and practice forced upon the southern people by economic conditions till the "new philosophy" was adopted. Lyon voted against a further importation of slaves in 1807,<sup>89</sup> but in 1820 he opposed the Missouri Compromise, giving as his reason, after he had expounded his favorite theory of state rights, his belief that a dispersion of the negroes would work for their benefit and aid them in attaining progress and freedom. In his printed article on this subject<sup>90</sup> Lyon challenges the statement of Files,<sup>91</sup> who, in advocating the compromise, had said that slavery was the greatest check to the progress of the free population that could be imagined, war, famine, and pestilence being excepted. In refuting this statement Lyon produces fig-

<sup>86</sup> Roe, Aunt Leanna, p. 86.

<sup>87</sup> Adams, op. cit., p. 112.

<sup>88</sup> Annals of Congress, Seventh Congress, Second Session, 1804-1805, pp. 1121 ff.

<sup>89</sup> Annals of Congress, Ninth Congress, Second Session, 1806-1807, p. 486.

<sup>90</sup> Reporter, March 22, 1820.

<sup>91</sup> Files Register, January 29, 1820.



ures which show that within the thirty-year period then closed, 1790-1820, free population in the slave states had increased 190 per cent, whereas that of the free states had increased only 141 per cent. He expresses the belief that the crossing of the Mississippi by the slaves would lead to their dispersion and final emancipation. It was perhaps Lyon's principles of state rights more than his opposition to slavery that influenced his position on the question; yet he was too much opposed to oppression to believe in slavery. However, despite the group of Yankees he brought with him on his numerous trips to Kentucky, he still found himself forced to rely in part upon negroes to help carry on his extensive industrial activities.

When Lyon arrived in Kentucky in 1801 to make a permanent settlement, he was accompanied by his second wife and their five children, his step-son, Elijah Galusha, and by ten families from Vermont.<sup>92</sup>

Lyon's first wife, Mary Hosford Lyon, died about 1783,<sup>93</sup> leaving him with the four children already mentioned, all of a tender age. About one year after her death he married Beulah Chittenden Galusha,<sup>94</sup> a young Vermont widow with one son. She was the daughter of Thomas Chittenden, the sister of Martin Chittenden, and the sister-in-law of Jonas Galusha (who had mar-

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<sup>92</sup> Roe, Aunt Leanna, p. 18.

<sup>93</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>94</sup> Loc. cit.

ried her sister, Mary), all governors of Vermont. In addition she was the wife, the mother, and the sister of congressmen; thus Beulah Lyon had indeed a rich political heritage.<sup>95</sup> She was fourteen years younger than her husband and was considered a handsome, fashionable woman, given much to gayety and society for many years after her arrival in Kentucky until she became a member of the Methodist church, having been converted at a class meeting under the preaching of the "Kentucky Boy," Peter Cartwright, an eminent Methodist divine.<sup>96</sup> Mrs. Lyon survived her husband but a short time; her death occurred at Eddyville, February 7, 1824.<sup>97</sup>

At the time the Lyons arrived in Kentucky they had five children: Minerva, 16; Chittenden, 14; Aurelia, 11; Matthew, Junior, 9; and Beulah, 5. Noah Chittenden, the fifth child to be born to this union, had died in Vermont in 1794, a babe but a few months old. Two children, Giles and Elizabeth Ann, were born in Kentucky.<sup>98</sup> Lyon's children, like their father, were prominent in their day.

Minerva married Dr. Hanson Catlett, a graduate of West Point and a surgeon in the United States army. Dr. Catlett served in the war against the Barbary States and in several Indian wars. He was Dickinson's second in the latter's fatal

<sup>95</sup> The Welsh American (a magazine published in New York City), March, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>96</sup> Roe, Recollections of a Frontier Life (Rockford, Illinois, 1885), p. 21.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 62. The family Bible has February 6, as the date.

<sup>98</sup> Records found in the family Bible in possession of Mrs. M. F. de Graffenreid, Eddyville, Kentucky.

duel with Andrew Jackson, which occurred in Kentucky, May 30, 1806.<sup>99</sup> It is difficult to understand his acting in this capacity, for his father-in-law was ever a warm friend of Jackson. In 1805 Lyon writes to Ninian Edwards relative to recommendations to secure Catlett's appointment to a position with the government.<sup>100</sup> Ann Fairfax, a daughter of Minerva and Hanson Catlett, was the mother of William P. Hepburn,<sup>101</sup> late congressman from Iowa, author of the Pure Food and Drug Law of 1906, and for fourteen years chairman of the House committee on interstate and foreign commerce. Another act of 1906, the Hepburn rate-bill, bears his name. Thus the twentieth century saw manifested the spirit of reform which Hepburn's great-grandfather had exhibited in the eighteenth.

Chittenden Lyon was a duplicate of his father in industrial and political enterprise. He assumed his father's indebtedness in 1812 and from that time on managed the greater part of the family's property. He was congressman from Kentucky, 1825-1837,<sup>102</sup> and, like his father, was a staunch supporter of Jackson. He died in 1842,<sup>103</sup> leaving a family of four children, two boys and two girls.

The second girl, Aurelia, married Dr. Henry Skinner. She died a few months prior to her father's death, leaving two children.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>99</sup> James Parton, Life of Andrew Jackson, 2 vols. (New York, 1860), I, 293.

<sup>100</sup> E. B. Washburne, The Edwards Papers (Chicago, 1884), p. 28.

<sup>101</sup> Dictionary of American Biography, VIII, 568.

<sup>102</sup> Collins, op. cit., II, 492.

<sup>103</sup> Adams, op. cit., p. 425.

<sup>104</sup> Loc. cit.

Matthew, Junior, became a wealthy land owner and resided near Eddyville, dabbling but little in politics. He died in 1839, leaving five children, among whom was General Hyman Benton Lyon of Civil War fame, a gallant, brave soldier with such strong Southern sympathies that he refused to sign the oath of allegiance to the United States after the war and died a "thoroughbred Confederate."<sup>105</sup> His death occurred in 1907 in Eddyville, where his widow, a daughter, Lorraine, and a son, Ernest, are the only representatives of this famous emigrant family now residing in the village of their enterprising ancestors.

Beulah died at the age of five years, a few days after the family's arrival in Kentucky.<sup>106</sup> Giles, the youngest of Lyon's sons and the first of his children to be born in Kentucky, died in 1823, in his twenty-first year.<sup>107</sup> He attended Daniel Barry's school and was a bright, forward student.<sup>108</sup> It is a further indication of Lyon's love for his countrymen that he should send this son, who was the joy of his old age, to be tutored by an Irishman.

Elizabeth Ann, born in Kentucky in 1605, married Dr. John Roe in 1820. In 1827, after the deaths of Mrs. Lyon and Giles, the Roes emigrated to Illinois, following in the footsteps of the beloved Brother Cartwright.<sup>109</sup> Mrs. Roe was a true pioneer,

<sup>105</sup> Lyon, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>106</sup> Jefferson Papers, August 12, 1801.

<sup>107</sup> Roe, Recollections, p. 60.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

and her accounts of their different settlements, made almost annually, when one day was ample time for the building of a house, the establishment of their possessions therein, the planting of the hedge and the garden, and the turning of the sod, make the events of modern life seem characterized by vacuity. Mrs. Roe, like all of Lyon's family that emigrated northward, was an ardent abolitionist and a "shouting Methodist." Lyon witnessed in his own home the strength of the influence of early environment, when Chittenden, a product of the conservative religious ideas of New England threatened to disown his young sister, native of the more emotional southland, if he ever heard her shouting, and to horsewhip her if she attended any more of the Methodist meetings,<sup>110</sup> where according to Mrs. Roe, the "slain of the Lord" lay for hours, shouting "Glory, Glory."<sup>111</sup> Dr. and Mrs. Roe were so consecrated to Methodism that they never felt an easy conscience when enjoying the comforts of life; therefore they were always moving westward, carrying with them and advancing their religious faith. The Roes emigrated as far west as Nebraska; some of their children settled in Iowa. In 1885 Mrs. Roe wrote that she had then survived all her father's family by thirty years.<sup>112</sup> She, herself, was survived by a numerous progeny of doctors, lawyers, and farmers. One of her sons, John Roe, was for years connected with the Equitable Life

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 291.

Assurance Society and lived in Louisville. Working with him was his cousin, Thompson A. Lyon, son of Chittenden. These two men died in the early 1900's.

When Lyon settled in Kentucky, he had just passed the half-century mark and was in the prime of life. Literally as well as figuratively speaking, he was a "giant who trod the boards"<sup>113</sup> in the Jefferson-Hamilton era, for he was of Herculean frame and constitution. Micah Taul, who claims to have known Lyon well, has left the only intimate account of Lyon in his Kentucky days that the writer has been able to find,<sup>114</sup> barring the political articles, which were decidedly prejudiced. Taul's picture is probably a bit colored with prejudice, too, although not written for political purposes, for Taul had withdrawn his support from Lyon in 1809, perhaps because of the latter's stand on the Embargo. Taul pictures Lyon as a rough, strong-minded, uneducated man, but the last adjective cannot correctly be applied to Lyon and is therefore an indication that Taul is either prejudiced or uninformed about the Green River Country's distinguished representative.

Lyon was often accused by his political enemies of being a "tavern haunter."<sup>115</sup> A man who traveled as much as he would of necessity be often seen at taverns, which in those days were hotels and saloons combined; a careful study of the tavern keep-

<sup>113</sup> Bowers, op. cit., Introduction, v.

<sup>114</sup> Taul, Micah, "Memoirs of Micah Taul," Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society, January, 1929, pp. 364-366.

<sup>115</sup> Loc. cit. Reporter, June 14, 1820.



ers, who gave bond not "to suffer any person to tipple or drink more than is necessary,"<sup>116</sup> might reveal the fact that they who thus made oath were sufficiently modern to define "tipple" and "necessary" rather loosely. Lyon was himself a tavern keeper both in Vermont and in Kentucky.<sup>117</sup> Taul says that Lyon could drink grog all day without getting drunk, and that he was wont to use this ability of his over that of his opponent to gain a political advantage.

Concerning this trick of Lyon's, Taul relates an incident that occurred in Somerset during the July court, 1803, or 1805.<sup>118</sup> Lyon, a candidate for Congress, engaged his opponent, David Walker, in a drinking bout; "the latter fell early," and Lyon placed him on a bed and fanned him diligently, requesting the people to stand back and give the patient as much air as possible, remarking that the Major was an excellent man but "often drank too much." The good people of Pulaski County, according to Taul, were completely taken in by the "old sinner," whom they considered a good old man, and gave him a small majority.

In 1820 Lyon's support of Colonel Butler against General Adair in the gubernatorial campaign brought from the latter's followers a violent attack in the press against Lyon, which included a renewal of the "wooden sword" affair and a charge of his being a frequenter of taverns. In answer to these charges

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<sup>116</sup> Littell, op. cit., I, 195.

<sup>117</sup> Adams, op. cit., p. 128.

<sup>118</sup> Taul, "Memoirs," loc. cit.



Lyon wrote an article which appeared in the Reporter under the caption, "Justice to Col. Lyon."<sup>119</sup> In this article Lyon states that he never had a tavern bill in any town he lived in amount to four dollars per year, exclusive of public dinners, that during his recent stay of about five weeks in a tavern at Lexington his expenses did not amount to more than five dollars, and that Colonel Taylor's clerk could attest that during his stay in Frankfort for the last legislative session of ten weeks his liquor account did not amount to three dollars. This account, if accurate, (and Lyon was regarded as honest) does not indicate that Lyon was a heavy drinker in those days, when Taul, in speaking of a man who does not drink, is forced to admit that he does not "remember that there was any such character," and that a temperance man would not have been likely to win in any popular election.

Taul relates another incident of interest concerning Lyon: the latter arrived in Monticello, Taul's home town, on a Saturday afternoon to attend the May court and put up at the only tavern in the place, a very humble one. Taul, learning of the presence of Lyon in town, invited him to a Sunday dinner, at which the guests were a Mr. and Mrs. Hadon, and their small daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Taul, and the Colonel, and for which the principal article of desert was a bowl of fresh wild strawberries young Mrs. Taul had picked. After the Colonel had

<sup>119</sup>Reporter, June 14, 1820.

eaten heartily of the meats and vegetables, his plate was changed (dinners were not served in courses in those days—at least not in Monticello), and he was asked if he would have some cream and strawberries; answering in the affirmative and adding that he would help himself, Lyon "seized" on the plate that contained all the berries and devoured the entire contents of the dish, "much to the amusement of the men, the amazement of the ladies, and the infinite distress of the child, who, when she saw the last berry disappear, set up a lusty scream."<sup>120</sup>

Lyon knew the art of electioneering, and he made his campaigns thorough and vigorous. He felt and said that the "people of the Western country . . . must be talked to face to face, they must be informed, they must be courted."<sup>121</sup> Through his circular letters, his speeches at political meetings, his contacts at taverns, his frequenting legislative assemblies and county courts, and his campaign tours, he must have reached a large majority of his constituents. He attended camp meetings, but while his wife and daughter participated in the services, he spent his time shaking hands warmly, bowing politely, and talking of national problems. Mrs. Roe naively says, "for this purpose my father went with us."<sup>122</sup>

Lyon saw his constituents "face to face"; he "informed"

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Faul, "Memoirs," loc. cit.

<sup>121</sup>

McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 489.

<sup>122</sup>

Roe, Recollections, p. 40.

them through almanacs and phamplets, which he distributed free; to those who must be "courted" he gave costly books from his store in Russellville.<sup>123</sup> Ere long the inhabitants of the Green River Country around Eddyville, whom Lyon had called "a kind of Arab" came to admire and respect "that ar Yankee Colonel," whom they had feared might sell them "wooden nutmegs and hams." They were soon so "Yankeefied" themselves that pails and tables replaced piggins and puncheons, and the women became so "sp iled" that they wanted and got "board housen, with shingles on 'em, and blankets on the floor, and dear knows what all."<sup>124</sup> And along with the change Matthew Lyon knew and also got what he was "arter" —the privilege of being the representative of these people in state and national affairs.

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Taul, "Memoirs," loc. cit.

124

Roe, Aunt Leanna, p. 48.

## CHAPTER IV

## PUBLIC CAREER IN KENTUCKY

"'Tis said that he brags  
 How one pair of stags  
     First paid for his passage from Europe,  
 But the price of a score  
 Will scarce send him o'er  
     And pay for his hangman a new rope.

## CHORUS

"O then ye are lucky,  
 Good men of Kentucky,  
     To choose spitting Matt for your idol;  
 Come frolic and caper  
 By the blaze of his taper<sup>1</sup>  
     And sing fol de rol, diddle de dol."

Thus was Lyon greeted by the Federalists upon his return to Congress after his coming to Kentucky. How that party hated Matthew Lyon, whose opposition they regarded as one of the main causes of their defeat in 1801! Adams wrote that there were no Americans in America, and that "if the Federalists had been blessed with common sense, they need not have been defeated by Duane, Callender, Cooper, and Lyon, or their great protector and patron (Jefferson)." <sup>2</sup> Shinn probably does not exaggerate when he says that "the

<sup>1</sup> Verses by Fessenden, entitled "The Dragon of Democracy." Quoted by McLaughlin, op.cit., p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Works of John Adams, edited by C. F. Adams, 10 vols. (Boston, 1856), IX, 582.

Federalists hated Matthew Lyon as the Devil hates holy  
<sup>3</sup>water."

Bayard's animosity for Lyon is typically that of his party. It was probably Lyon whom he called a "blockhead" in his letter to Hamilton, complaining of Burr's not having pushed his chances<sup>4</sup> for the presidency. In his speech against the repeal of the Judiciary Act Bayard said that Jefferson could not compensate Lyon for the latter's important part in the election of 1801, for "his character was low," but that his son had been<sup>5</sup> handsomely provided for in one of the Executive offices. In these two instances Bayard unintentionally gives Lyon more credit for Jefferson's victory than he gave in the letter which was first published, by a strange coincidence, but a short while after Lyon's death. In this letter Bayard claims all the credit<sup>6</sup> for the Federalists and especially for himself. It was Bayard who, in February, 1799, introduced the resolution to deny Lyon his seat in Congress, charging him with being a convicted felon, when he returned to that body after his enforced absence in the Vergennes jail.

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<sup>3</sup> Josiah Shinn, Pioneers and Makers of Arkansas (Washington, 1908), p. 137.

<sup>4</sup> W. O. Lynch, Fifty years of Party Warfare (Indianapolis, 1931), p. 111.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p., 132.

<sup>6</sup> Niles Register, November 16, 1822.

These statements and actions of Bayard's were sufficient basis for Lyon's dislike for him. Upon Lyon's final departure from Congress Bayard sent John Rowan to intercede for him and ask Lyon's forgiveness. In the presence of Rowan and others Bayard apologized for his former actions and expressed a desire for Lyon's friendship. Lyon says that Dana, of Connecticut, was the only one of his former enemies who did not make formal apologies to him.<sup>7</sup>

But even when Lyon arrived in Washington in 1803, events were occurring which finally led to a situation wherein the opinions of Lyon and the Federalists were in accord on commercial and war measures. Federalist attacks on Lyon ceased when he became the center of opposition to Jefferson and Madison's administrative policies. Lyon's advocacy of protection and his opposition to the War of 1812 led him into friendship with Josiah Quincy, a strong Federalist of Massachusetts. He and Quincy corresponded frequently, and in 1812 Lyon writes Quincy telling him not to despair nor to permit Massachusetts to despair, adding,<sup>8</sup> "Let me see no disposition in her to disunion."

With the county of Livingston and the town of Eddyville already established upon Lyon's arrival in 1801, he had had to bide his time for a congressional election. In the meantime he served for one session in the Kentucky legislature, having been in 1802 Livingston County's first representative.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 446.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 488.

<sup>9</sup> Collins, op. cit., II, 491.

In the congressional election of 1802 he successfully opposed David Walker and was re-elected to each succeeding Congress till 1810, when his opposition to the administration, and particularly his opposition to war,<sup>10</sup> made him one of the seventy members of Congress who lost their seats that fall. His zeal for the development of industry and of the West, which was tantamount to his own success, evidently caused him to forget his own statement in 1806, when he prophesied that "the election screw in Kentucky would squeeze as flat as a pancake" any gentleman who opposed the Executive, and when he stated positively that so popular was Jefferson in Kentucky, where he was regarded as the one who had saved the people from the stamp and excise acts, that even the most influential man in the state could<sup>11</sup> not get a hundred votes after deserting the administration. The new group that entered Congress in 1810 were young and impetuous; Henry Clay and Robert M. Johnson, of Kentucky were<sup>12</sup> their leaders.

Lyon's congressional career from 1803 onward is marked by his support of every measure that he thought tended towards the development of the West (which he rightly regarded as tantamount to the development of the nation) or to increase and encourage industrial activities. Despite the fact that he opposed

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<sup>10</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>11</sup> Annals of Congress, Ninth Congress, First session, 1805-1806, p. 1060.

<sup>12</sup> John Spencer Bassett, A Short History of the United States (New York, 1921), p. 318.



administrative policies of a Republican president who was a friend and much beholden to him, Lyon exercised strong Republican principles throughout the entire period, never disregarding an opportunity to attempt to check encroachments upon the powers of the House, either by the Senate or by the other branches of the government.

When a resolution was introduced in the House providing that the papers and information concerning Wilkinson be sent to the War Department and acknowledging that the House had no jurisdiction in the case, Lyon said he had rather cut off his right hand than to make such acknowledgment and that if the court of inquiry failed, the question should be returned to the House.<sup>13</sup> He objected to the Senate's amendment to the salary act of 1807, which proposed to make the act perpetual, saying that the "we" in the resolution included the Senate and the President, whereas the control of money belonged to the House only, and that it should keep the purse strings of the nation.<sup>14</sup>

The purchase of Louisiana in 1803 coincided with Lyon's plans for western progress, but he objected strenuously to "the horrid kind of government"<sup>15</sup> first proposed for it, saying that it gave Jefferson Napoleonic powers,<sup>16</sup> and that this measure

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<sup>13</sup> Annals of Congress, Tenth Congress, First Session, 1807-1809. I, 1402.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 1464.

<sup>15</sup> The Edwards Papers, edited by E. B. Washburne, (Chicago, 1884), p. 28.

<sup>16</sup> Annals of Congress, Eighth Congress, First Session, 1803-1804, p. 1059.

was the result of sectional jealousies. It is characteristic of Lyon's every expression of democracy that he should always oppose any measure that withheld the right of suffrage and self-government and support every measure that extended this right. For this reason he opposed the act providing for the government of Orleans Territory<sup>17</sup> and voted to extend the right of suffrage to the residents of Mississippi Territory in 1807, opposing the proviso that the act should not take effect till<sup>18</sup> the assent of the Georgia legislature was obtained.

He prophesied that the Republican party would fall as a result of its restrictive measures occasioned by the foreign situation, and that the Treasury surplus would be exhausted; so naturally and with some degree of truth, he could say, "I told you so," in 1809, when the number of Federalist seats was greatly increased and a bill for diverting the Sinking Fund proportionment to the redemption of public debts was under<sup>19</sup> consideration. In accordance with his democratic principles<sup>20</sup> Lyon advocated the appointment of House committees by ballot, a practice which was followed only in the first Congress, this power being exercised by the Speaker from 1790 to 1911. He objected to nomination by party caucus and always referred to

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., Tenth Congress, First Session, I, 960.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 1007.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., Eleventh Congress, I, 356

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., I, 58.

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Madison as the "caucus president."

Lyon had opposed Federalist measures for increasing the army by a President's volunteer militia in 1798, and when a like measure was introduced in the latter part of Jefferson's administration, he opposed that also, giving as his reason that such increased powers of the Executive made men Tories. In his speech on the Detachment of Militia measure, passed in 1810, he said that he had always been for defense measures because he could not keep his eye off the mouth of the Mississippi, but that he was opposed to Executive encroachments as much now as he was twelve years ago, when all the Republicans opposed a like measure, adding, in relation to the accusation that he was consistent only in opposition: "When the Republicans shall, with the good old doctrine of 1798, be in the majority, if I live to see it, I shall have the pleasure of being in the majority again." 22 Aside from these instances and a similar one in which Lyon opposed a bill giving Jefferson power to employ additional seamen, 23 Lyon supported every measure brought forward during his stay in Congress for the increase or improvement of the army and navy. This was in line with his desire for national expansion.

In November, 1807, when an additional appropriation for the Navy Department was under consideration, Lyon said

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- 21 Edwards Papers, p. 33. McLaughlin op. cit., p. 469.  
 22 Annals of Congress, Eleventh Congress, 1810, II, 874.  
 23 Ibid., Tenth Congress, First Session, 1808, II, 1500.

that when appropriations were made without authority and he liked them, he voted for them, and if he did not like them, he voted against them. In this instance, he said he liked the bill and would therefore vote for it.<sup>24</sup> It will be remembered that Lyon had contracts at this time from the Navy Department, and it should also be remembered that the Chesapeake affair had occurred and that England had not shown much inclination to meet the demands of the United States for reparation. A large group, indignant over the affair, was clamoring for war. This Jefferson was trying to avert. Lyon was not for an outright declaration of war,--he said he was too much of a Quaker politician for that,--but behind closed doors in Congress on November 17, 1807, he moved a resolution providing that payment of any debt due England or English subjects in the United States be forbidden by law.<sup>25</sup> This resolution was objected to universally, and Lyon withdrew it, later asserting that the United States lost at least \$40,000,000 by not adopting it.<sup>26</sup> In February, 1808, Lyon wrote Jefferson, reminding him that the opportunity for taking Montreal by an army's reaching there by ice was fast slipping away and advocating that an army be sent for that purpose immediately, saying that if the

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Ibid., I, 847.

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Ibid., I, 921.

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Durrett Collection, (University of Chicago), 446. D S (M S), December 8, 1808.

British minister should object he could be handed his country's justification for taking the Danish fleet.<sup>27</sup> These conditions, and Lyon's interest in the development of an army for the protection of the West and a navy for the defense of commerce, together with his private interest in increasing the number of gunboats, were sufficient bases for Lyon's advocacy of a strong army and navy. Those two departments probably never had a stronger supporter than Matthew Lyon. He gave his support in 1810 to a bill appropriating a sum of money for making an experiment with Fulton's torpedo, or submarine explosion, quoting Hopkinson's "Battle of the Kegs" to show the alarm that the British felt at a parcel of kegs in Revolutionary days, and<sup>28</sup> adding that Fulton's invention would be far more effective.

When John Randolph decided in 1804 that he would divide the Republicans and prevent Jefferson's re-election, there was one in the House who dared oppose this caustic Virginian. Lyon's stand on the Yazoo question again brought him into national prominence. The Yazoo claims, dating their origin from Washington's administration, were concerned with an intensive grant of lands which the Georgia legislature of 1795 had made to a land company, and the price agreed upon had been paid.<sup>29</sup> A previous grant had been made in 1789, but

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<sup>27</sup> Jefferson Papers, February 9, 1808.

<sup>28</sup> Annals of Congress, Eleventh Congress, 1810, II, 1627.

<sup>29</sup> Annals of Congress, Eighth Congress, First Session, 1803-1804, p. 1153.

since the purchasers did not make the required payment, this sale had not been consummated, though these earlier purchasers were also presenting claims at the time of the debate in Congress. The legislature of Georgia in 1796 had declared null and void the act of the 1795 legislature, which had in every way been duly passed and approved, and had burned the papers relating thereto.<sup>30</sup> Then Georgia in a convention ceded to the United States the lands in question, which were outside the present domain of Georgia and had probably belonged to the United States since the adoption of the constitution. Adams arranged a compromise by which the United States undertook to organize it into the Mississippi Territory and to compensate both Georgia and the company.<sup>31</sup> An act of Congress in 1802 authorized the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Treasury, and the Attorney General to receive propositions of compromise from the various claimants.<sup>32</sup> This commission reported that the United States should pay Georgia \$1,250,000 and the grantees the proceeds of the sale of one-fifth of the lands they had purchased from Georgia. (They had bought forty millions of acres at one and one-half cents per acre).<sup>33</sup> A bill to put this

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loc. cit.

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Bassett, op. cit., 301.

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Annals of Congress, Eighth Congress, First Session. 1803-1804, p. 1155.

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Loc. cit.



compromise into effect was under consideration when Randolph opened his attack against the administration.

Randolph claimed that the legislature that made the sale in 1795 was corrupt, which was probably true, and that the sale was therefore null and void. He introduced a series of resolutions concerning the question; these he called the articles of the democratic creed.<sup>34</sup> Lyon did not attempt to prove that the sale was not corrupt; he based his argument on the faith of public contracts and the lack of jurisdiction of Congress to legislate for the states. He said that he was a democrat, but that he refused to accept as his the articles of Randolph's creed; then he so amended Randolph's resolutions as to make them meaningless and void. The amended articles were nothing more than a strong declaration of state rights. In his speech Lyon said:

I do not believe that this House have power to inquire into the motives of the integrity of the legislature of Georgia or any other state; their authority is equal to and independent of that of the legislature of the United States within their own sphere. I do not believe that any judiciary in this country have that power. If I am not mistaken it has been held by members of this House from one of the greatest states in the union, that the judiciary of the United States have no right to inquire into the constitutionality of a law passed by Congress; if this be so (which by the way I don't think to be the case) how can they or we inquire beyond the constitution itself into the motives of individual members of the legislature of a sovereign and independent state? 35

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Ibid.

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Ibid.



This bill was defeated, but came up again in 1805. Gideon Granger, the Postmaster General, had been employed by the land companies to lobby for them.<sup>36</sup> This angered Randolph, who, knowing that Lyon had contracts with Granger's department, thought he saw some relation between this fact and Lyon's support of the bill; and in his speech of opposition Randolph made the following insinuation:

. . . You must know, sir, that the person so often alluded to (Gideon Granger) maintains a Jackall, fed, not as you would suppose, upon the offal of contract, but with the fairest pieces in the shambles; and at night when honest men are in bed, does this obscene animal prowl through the streets of this vast and desolate city, seeking whom he may tamper with. . . .<sup>37</sup>

When Randolph ceased, a friend of Lyon's remarked that the member from Virginia must have keen optics to see while he was asleep, since he, of course, belonged to the class of honest men.<sup>38</sup>

Lyon's answer came, full of invective, irony, and wit. This speech is regarded as his masterpiece, being quoted as his phillipic against Randolph. Lyon says that these charges had been fabricated in the disordered imagination of Randolph because he (Lyon) had refused to sing encore to Randolph's political dogmas. He concludes his speech by saying:

I came to this House as a representative of a free, a brave and a generous people. I thank my Creator that he gave me the face of a man, not that of an ape or a monkey, and that he gave me the heart

<sup>36</sup> Bassett, op. cit., p. 302.

<sup>37</sup> Annals of Congress, Eighth Congress, Second Session, 1804-1805, p. 1106.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 1116.

of a man also, a heart which will spare to its last drop in defense of the dignity of the station my generous constituents have placed me in. / I shall trouble the House no farther at this time by observing that I shall not be deterred by the threats of the member from Virginia from giving the vote I think the interest and honor of the nation requires; and by saying if that member means to be understood that I have been offered contracts from the Postmaster General, the assertion or insinuation has no foundation in truth and I challenge him to bring forward his boasted proof. <sup>39</sup>

Jefferson tried to hold the North by supporting the compromise, <sup>40</sup> for most of the grantees were from that section. Lyon gave Jefferson stronger support than any other congressman, thus exerting an influence on Jefferson's second election the strength of which can only be conjectured. However, westward expansion and state rights were the stronger motives for Lyon's attitude.

The compromise bill failed repeatedly and was finally settled in 1814, when neither Randolph nor Lyon was in Congress. The grantees were voted \$8,000,000 on the strength of Marshall's <sup>41</sup> ruling in the case of Fletcher vs. Peck, which upheld Lyon's argument that a public contract cannot be voided.

When Lyon entered Congress in 1803, America's foreign commerce was being carried on under England's ruling in the case of the Polly. The Essex ruling further implicated affairs and <sup>42</sup> made restrictions on our carriers greater. The Non-Importation

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39

Ibid., p. 1121.

40

Bassett, op. cit., p. 302.

41

Loc. cit.

42

Bassett, op. cit., p. 307.

Act, which Lyon supported, though he called it a "milk and water measure," and wanted it to go into effect in July<sup>43</sup> instead of November, was passed in 1806. On the last day of that year Monroe and Pinckney signed at London a treaty which Jefferson regarded so humiliating that he refused to submit<sup>44</sup> it to the Senate for ratification; Lyon, however, favored<sup>45</sup> the treaty. England and France by their various decrees restricting neutral shipping made a football of American commerce, and Jefferson, feeling that the nation was unprepared<sup>46</sup> for war, did all he could to avert it.

As a result of England's failure to pay proper attention to the demands of the American government in relation to the Chesapeake affair and of the ineffectuality of all measures thus far advanced, the Embargo Act, representative of Jefferson's own policy of settling the commercial difficulties without war, was introduced and almost immediately<sup>47</sup> passed. There were but few Southerners who failed to support the bill: Randolph was one, and Lyon another.<sup>48</sup> For his opposition to this<sup>49</sup> measure, Lyon was called a Federalist. Sears says, after dis-

<sup>43</sup> Annals of Congress, Ninth Congress, First Session, 1805-1806, p. 874.

<sup>44</sup> Bassett, op. cit., p. 310.

<sup>45</sup> Monroe Papers, September 26, 1811.

<sup>46</sup> Bassett, op. cit., p. 315.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 310.

<sup>48</sup> L. M. Sears, Jefferson and the Embargo, (Durham, N. C., 1927), p. 241.

<sup>49</sup> The Edwards Papers, p. 33.

cussing Lyon's opposition to this measure, "But just as the 'best people' in Virginia upheld the embargo from a district esprit de corps, so their kindred in the Bluegrass gave the embargo just the support which it had a right to expect from gentlemen."<sup>50</sup>

According to that author's estimation Lyon did not belong to the "gentlemen" class. It is interesting to note in this connection what John Pope, one of the "gentlemen" from Kentucky who supported the embargo, had to say of it. He wrote to Ninian Edwards:

. . . Mr. Lyon has turned fed., at least he opposed the administration; he has been disappointed in some contracts he wished to make with government for the saline licks. . . . Matthew Lyon wrote a letter for publication against the embargo, which induced me to come out in its favour. . . . Please to have my address to the people published in the Bardstown and Russellville papers but don't let it be understood it was done at my request. . . . 51

Later he wrote: "You must be careful not to intimate any<sup>52</sup> doubt of mine on the efficiency of the Embargo." Many of the Republicans doubtless felt as Pope did, that a party man could<sup>53</sup> not afford to be too "squeamish on a subordinate affair," and for political reasons voted for the measure. But it was not Lyon's nature to act in any but an independent manner, according to his conscience, let the consequences be what they might.

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<sup>50</sup> Sears, loc.cit.

<sup>51</sup> The Edwards Papers, p. 34.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

Many invectives were hurled at Lyon at this time, and he answered in kind. He called the act the gentlemen's "dear, darling embargo," saying in 1810, "--they hug to their bosoms the viper that has stung them, and seem determined to cling to the poisonous reptile until they can be indulged in changing it for a pet."<sup>54</sup> When McKee called those who opposed the Embargo un-American, Lyon answered: "I lived in those days that the young man has read of. I never had a drop of tory blood in my veins."<sup>55</sup> When the Supplementary Embargo Bill was under consideration in December, 1807, Lyon said that he did not like the string of oaths attached, and that he felt ashamed because the House could not adopt a plaster to a sore without stretching it too far over on the sound flesh, and thus causing danger of gangrene.<sup>56</sup> At another time he said that they had made the blister larger than the sore, which was true, for the Embargo act hurt no country except that which was its author, and it made commercial conditions far worse than they were before its passage.

Friends of the act claimed that the commerce of the United States uninterdicted by the belligerents amounted to less than three millions of dollars annually, but Lyon in a speech he made on the report of the foreign relations committee in December, 1808, pointed out that in the year ending October

<sup>54</sup>

Annals of Congress, Eleventh Congress, 1810, II, 1647.

<sup>55</sup>

*Ibid.*, p. 1649.

<sup>56</sup>

Annals of Congress, Tenth Congress, First Session, 1807-1808, I, 1244.

1807, there was upwards of twenty-nine millions of dollars' <sup>57</sup>  
 worth of exports from the United States uninterdicted. Lyon  
 was evidently accurate in this statement, for he took his  
 figures from the Secretary of the Treasury's report. Lyon  
 says in this speech that he is a friend to commerce, but that  
 he would never go to war for it. Though opposed to war, he  
 says that when war is agreed on by a majority, he will coop-  
 erate in every way with zeal and vigor, and that no more of <sup>58</sup>  
 his caviling shall be heard.

The Embargo was superseded by the Non-Intercourse Law  
 of 1809, which Jefferson reluctantly signed a few days prior <sup>59</sup>  
 to his leaving the presidency. Lyon supported this bill, <sup>60</sup>  
 not liking it of course, but preferring it to the Embargo.  
 When Macon Bill No. 1 was so amended in the Senate as to be  
 only a repeal of the Non-Intercourse Law, it failed in the  
 House. Lyon, who had voted for the bill as it went to the <sup>61</sup>  
 Senate, advocated its passage in the amended form, for he  
 was anxious that commercial activities be resumed as speedily  
 as possible. In his speech on Macon Bill No. 2, made while it  
 was being debated in Committee of the whole, Lyon supported the

<sup>57</sup>  
 Durrett Collection, 446. D S (M S), December 8, 1808.

<sup>58</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>  
 Bassett, op. cit., p. 311.

<sup>60</sup>  
Annals of Congress, Tenth Congress, Second Session, 1808-1809,  
 p. 1512.

<sup>61</sup>  
Ibid., Eleventh Congress, 1810, II, 1646.



proposed amendment laying a duty of 50 per cent on all goods imported from England or France, hoping that this would encourage manufacturing in the South and West, where he believed the negroes could be successfully employed in the factories without hindering agricultural development. In defense of his stand on the tariff, which was opposed to his principle of low taxes, Lyon said that he was not willing to lay duties on articles that could not be manufactured in the United States, but

. . . I am willing to go as far as any member of this House in laying duties on articles we can manufacture here; because I know whatever may be paid for the articles manufactured here, will be a sacrifice for the nation's good. This sacrifice will be a mere <sup>62</sup> trifle, of but short duration, a mere bugbear. . . .

How preponderant has become this trifle; how real the bugbear!

The amendment providing additional duties was objected to by the Senate, and the House sustained the objection. Macon Bill No. 2 was passed May 1, 1810, on the day of adjournment. <sup>63</sup> It provided that all restrictions on our commerce with England and France be removed and that the President be empowered to re-impose former restrictions on either power when the other repealed its decrees or orders. This measure was quite as ineffectual as its predecessors, but it was partially responsible for our war with England in 1812; <sup>64</sup> Napoleon informed Madison that the Berlin and Milan decrees would be repealed November 1, 1810, and Congress accordingly re-imposed the terms of the Non-Intercourse Act against England. <sup>65</sup> Although Lyon had begun

<sup>62</sup> Annals of Congress, Eleventh Congress, 1810, II, 1900.

<sup>63</sup> Bassett, op. cit., p. 311.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 317.

<sup>65</sup> Loc. cit.



his congressional career as an ardent friend of the French government, voting against the act which abrogated our treaties with that country, still he had no liking for the Corsican Tyrant.<sup>66</sup>

In the latter part of Lyon's congressional career, when war seemed imminent, he did all he could to prevent it. He was not unconscious of nor unmoved by the humiliation to which the United States was being subjected, but he was fully aware of the weakness of the army and navy at that time and knew also the strength of the power to be coped with. Nor was he alone in his belief that nothing could be gained by a war with England. Lyon feared the enemy would take Louisiana, where the inhabitants were yet chafing from being governed by a foreign nation. He believed that the natives of Louisiana would join the British, who might bring over from the West Indies negro recruits to precipitate a revolt of the slaves, and thus completely conquer the South.<sup>67</sup>

Lyon said in 1810 that he valued the rights of Americans as highly as any man, but saw clearly that those rights must not be confused with power. America had a right to freedom of the sea, he said, but not the power successfully to challenge England's pre-eminence on the water. He could see no chance of victory were the United States to engage in a war on the sea, where the physical forces employed would be in a ratio of forty to one.<sup>68</sup> It was preposterous, he said, for gentlemen to say they would not submit:

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Monroe Papers, September 26, 1811.

67

Monroe Papers, September 26, 1811.

68

Annals of Congress, Eleventh Congress, 1810, II, 1649.

. . . When a thundershower overtakes me on the road, and wets me to the skin, do I go home bawling about submission and tell the people that I have submitted to be rained on; do I work myself into a rage, and make a solemn declaration to the world that I will no longer submit to be rained on when I go abroad? There is some similarity in the two cases. . . .<sup>69</sup>

England, Lyon contended, had power on the sea which the United States could not control. Lyon, like many others, knew that he would be injured financially by the war, but far beyond the economic factors involved, his feelings of patriotism expanded. To doubt his sincerity, to doubt his loyalty, is to question the right of individual freedom, the right to act in accordance with one's principles. He believed that when an individual or a nation approached insurmountable obstacles, it was the part of wisdom to delay reaching such obstacles until strength sufficient for success were gained. That the United States was successful in the war that ensued is not due to Lyon's fallacy of judgment concerning the condition of his own country but rather to a lack of understanding of England's condition and purpose.

During the war, Lyon, as has been indicated, asked for government contracts to make gunboats or to furnish supplies of pork and beef. He was not awarded either contract,<sup>70</sup> but his friend, William Morrison, of Kaskaskia, a Mississippi River magnate and one of the wealthiest men in Illinois Territory, was awarded a contract for supplying the army in his military district and made a great deal of money from it.<sup>71</sup>

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69

Ibid., 1650.

70

Letter from Navy Department to writer, September 9, 1931.

71

Reynolds, op. cit., p. 129.

On June 2, 1814, Lyon writes Jackson, congratulating him upon his brilliant success at New Orleans, while "Boasting Generals" in other parts have spent much money and lost many lives without accomplishing anything. Lyon mentions in this connection Harrison in particular and doubtless had Wilkinson in mind, also. In this letter Lyon deplores the check of prosperity and advancement that America has experienced as a result of the war, but prophesies that his nation is destined to civilize and control the western continent. There is vision and truth in his concluding paragraph:

You may live to see considerable progress made in this important work of civilization. I shall not--some years ago I did expect I should, but this war and its mismanagement has put us back fifteen years. While the government have been spending 110 millions the people are impoverished at least at the rate of 400 millions more including their losses by the antecedent restrictions now acknowledged to have been futile and the discouragements consequent that will put far off the days when the American flag shall triumph unopposed on the seas and the then American government pervade the continent. 72

When Aaron Burr found himself homeless and jobless at the close of his Vice-Presidency, he decided he would like to be assigned to a foreign embassy. <sup>73</sup> As Lyon rode into Washington from Alexandria one morning, early in 1805, Wilkinson, who lived near the navy yards, called to him and asked him to stop. In the conversation that ensued, Wilkinson mentioned Burr's desire to Lyon, who immediately answered that the affair could not be

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72

Jackson Papers (Library of Congress), June 2, 1814.

73

Wilkinson, op. cit., II, Appendix XLVIII.

arranged. However, Lyon, on account of his friendship for Wilkinson, suggested that Burr go immediately to Nashville, declare his intention of settling there, and in July announce for the congressional election to be held there that year. He believed that Burr could be elected and might thus have an opportunity to be chosen Speaker for the next Congress. Some time later Burr asked Lyon to recommend him to Jefferson for a foreign embassy; this Lyon refused to do. However, he offered Burr a passage on his boat (Lyon was bringing a cargo from Pittsburgh to Eddyville on his way home from Congress). Burr arrived in Pittsburgh the evening before Lyon left and begged him to await Wilkinson, who was expected in a day or so. Lyon assured Burr that in all the journeys of a long life he had never waited a half hour for the company of any man, and left at the appointed time. In about thirty-six hours Lyon was overtaken by Burr's handsome, swift craft, and the two boats were lashed together until they reached Marietta, where Burr stopped for a visit with Herman Blennerhasset and his charming wife.<sup>74</sup>

At Louisville, where Lyon had been delayed on business, Burr again overtook him. Here Burr exchanged his large boat for a smaller one which he ordered on to Eddyville, while he himself went overland to Nashville, going by way of Frankfort and Lexington.<sup>75</sup> This was Burr's first visit to Kentucky. At Nashville he was received with much acclaim, especially by Jackson. Calling

74

Ibid.

75

Collins, op. cit., I, 25.

on Lyon at Eddyville on his way to Wilkinsonville, he asked Lyon to write a letter to a friend of his (Lyon's) and ask if the matter of Burr's being elected from Tennessee might not yet be set on foot. Lyon told Burr that he had lost his chances of election by delay, since a term of residence in the state was a prerequisite. However, he wrote to the friend (evidently Jackson), who answered in the negative. Lyon said he neither trusted nor liked Burr but thought he was being unjustly treated at this time because of his participation in what Lyon called "fair play among duellists." On the occasion of his coming to Kentucky with Lyon, he had about him an air of mystery, according to the report of Lyon, and Wilkinson seemed conversant with his plans.<sup>76</sup>

Wilkinson Lyon had known and admired since the retreat from Ticonderoga in 1777. In the election of 1801 Lyon had suspected Wilkinson of being a Federalist, but the latter in one of his visits to Eddyville had explained his conduct at that time in a satisfactory manner.<sup>77</sup> It would be interesting to know what the two arch conspirators thought of Lyon. Like Bayard, they may have thought him a blockhead who would make a valuable tool. More likely they thought to induce him to join them in the enterprise, but Lyon's patriotism and loyalty would not permit that. His opinion of Wilkinson changed when the latter began to be suspected of having plans inimical to the union. Lyon wrote Jefferson in 1806 advising that Wilkinson, whom the President had appointed as military and civil governor of Upper Louisiana,

76

Wilkinson, loc. cit.

77

Ibid.



be ordered to the western frontier as protection against the Spanish so that his place as governor might "unexceptionally" be filled by another and the "murmur" die away.<sup>78</sup> In 1807 Lyon writes again to the President, saying that if the place is left vacant till the rising of Congress, it will be said that Jefferson is reserving the place for Wilkinson as a reward for his hostilities against the people of the Territory and to give him an opportunity for increasing his atrocities.<sup>79</sup> The likely young man who in 1777 had been "a standing correction of the follies and irregularities" existing at headquarters of the Northern Department had lost favor with his old friend. No man could be a friend of Lyon's and a known or suspected enemy of the United States. Others were duped by the wily Wilkinson and retained confidence in him long after Lyon had withdrawn his.

Lyon during his stay in Congress was closely associated with many of the most outstanding men of the times. He and Gallatin were close friends. Party affiliations probably drew them together at first, but their friendship continued even after they had left Congress. In 1816 Gallatin writes Lyon just before he starts abroad, answering Lyon's letter of the preceding fall. In this letter Gallatin answers questions Lyon has asked concerning the capital required and the profits that may be expected from a glass factory Lyon contemplates establishing.<sup>81</sup> In a letter to

<sup>78</sup> Jefferson Papers, April 1, 1806.

<sup>79</sup> Jefferson Papers, February 27, 1807.

<sup>80</sup> Wilkinson, loc. cit.

<sup>81</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 495.

Monroe, June 7, 1817, Lyon speaks of an incident wherein he influenced Jefferson and Gallatin not to dismiss W. C. C. Claiborne from the governorship of Louisiana Territory, because the latter, in opposition to his instructions, had established a bank at New Orleans.<sup>82</sup> James Lyon, who was in New Orleans at the time, had written his father, giving first-hand information of Claiborne's actions, and Lyon showed the letter to Gallatin, with the result<sup>83</sup> that Claiborne was merely reproved and not dismissed.

Lyon objected to Madison's being chosen by a caucus in 1808, and since Madison carried on Jefferson's policies relative to the foreign relations of the United States, Lyon and Madison were not very friendly. However, Madison had great respect for Lyon's knowledge of affairs and was influenced by him in one instance, at least. At a dinner party with the President Lyon had been accosted by Madison with the question: "Col. Lyon, don't you think the Indians originally the right and proper owners of this country?" To this Lyon replied, "Yes, sir, in conjunction with the Bears and the Wolves."<sup>84</sup> In the conversation that ensued, Lyon's ideas about the matter under discussion so impressed Madison that he told Gallatin to drop the report he had ordered<sup>85</sup> Gallatin to make on the Indians only a few days previous.

When Congress voted to call an extra session for May 22,

82

McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 495.

83

Lyon to Monroe, June 7, 1817, Quoted by McLaughlin op. cit., p. 446.

84

Jackson Papers, (Library of Congress,) August 20, 1816.

85

Ibid.



1809, Lyon voted against it. Madison had then been elected but not inaugurated. Lyon wrote to Madison, who was then Secretary of State and asked to be assigned a part of the ship Pacific<sup>86</sup> which had not been taken up by the government. Lyon said that he had long wanted to visit his sister in England, but had never had the time. With his opinions, he said, he could be of no further use to his country during the session which was to end March 4.<sup>87</sup> Lyon offered to carry to England any package or letters Madison might wish him to take.<sup>88</sup> Evidently Lyon was not granted a passage on the Pacific, for he was in Congress all the time it was in session that year, and his vote was seldom in line with Madison's policies. Lyon writes Monroe in 1811 that he fears Madison is enveloped "in the ruinous system which he and his predecessors have pursued since the unfortunate rejection of that treaty (with England, December 31, 1806)."<sup>89</sup>

There seems never to have been any rupture in the relations between Lyon and Monroe. When the latter was called home from France by Washington, under rather humiliating conditions, Lyon was in Philadelphia to greet him.<sup>90</sup> When in 1811 it seemed certain that Madison's message in December would be a war message, Lyon wrote Monroe begging him to exert every influence on the President to prevent his taking this step. "Your cup will overflow with

<sup>86</sup> Madison Papers, Library of Congress, January 22, 1809.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Madison Papers, January 24, 1809.

<sup>89</sup> Monroe Papers, Library of Congress, September 22, 1811.

<sup>90</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 502.

gratitude from the nation if you should be the author of its peace,"  
 he writes.<sup>91</sup> Monroe in 1820 appointed his old friend as factor to  
 the Cherokees Indians at Spadra Bluff, Arkansas,<sup>92</sup> a position which  
 Lyon held at his death.

Lyon's support of Jefferson's early administrative measures  
 and his letters to the President indicate a close relationship  
 between the two. Their interests in the sustenance and advance-  
 ment of the Republican press are alike; both aided Republican  
 printers by encouragement and by contributions from their pens  
 and purses.<sup>93</sup> Lyon without doubt left Congress in 1801 anticipating  
 an early return. His letters reveal the fact that he was cogni-  
 zant of Jefferson's contemplated appointments,<sup>94</sup> probably indi-  
 cating that he was consulted. Lyon's friends were given appoint-  
 ments through his influence.<sup>95</sup> Jefferson is said to have offered to  
 Lyon himself the commissaryship of the western army, which was  
 declined.<sup>96</sup> If Lyon contemplated accepting, this might account  
 for his deep interest in the forts on the Ohio and Mississippi  
 and for the renewal of his acquaintance with Wilkinson. There is  
 a tradition that Lyon once called upon Adams and was refused a  
 reception because he was wearing boots, and that this incident

91

Monroe Papers, September 22, 1811.

92

Records Office of Indians Affairs. Letter from Commissioner  
 of Indian Affairs to writer, September 14, 1931.

93

Jefferson Papers, December 17, 1803.

94

Ibid., April 4, 1801.

95

Ibid.

96

J. Fairfax McLaughlin, "A Picturesque Politician of Jeffer-  
 son's Time," Century, April, 1903.

caused Jefferson to announce that his friends would always be  
<sup>97</sup>  
 welcome, with or without boots.

As late as April, 1806, Lyon speaks of Jefferson in terms of highest commendation in a speech in which he opposed a proposition of Randolph's that the Mediterranean fund be commuted for the salt tax. Coming from the source it did, it was questioned by Lyon, who thought it might be a "gilded pill." Randolph had vowed his opposition to the President would cease only with his breath, and Lyon vowed to support "an Executive I confide in, an Executive more popular than any who have ever had the guidance  
<sup>98</sup>  
 of the affairs of this nation, and in my opinion, most deserving." But by 1807, probably as a result of Jefferson's failure to submit the treaty of December 31, 1806, and to make an appointment to supersede Wilkinson as civil governor of Upper Louisiana, began a coolness between the two. Lyon's letters to Jefferson henceforward are characterized by a total lack of personal interest.  
<sup>99</sup>

In the letter of February 9, 1808, in which Lyon advises an attack in Montreal, he tells Jefferson that he has had in mind, calling on him for several days but feared to leave the House while the bill for the removal of the seat of government was under discussion. (Lyon opposed the removal of the capital to Philadelphia, saying that he had been dragged to Washington by

<sup>97</sup>

J. B. Lyon to Greenville (Tennessee) Sun , December 8, 1919.

<sup>98</sup>

Annals of Congress, Ninth Congress, First Session, 1805-1806, 1055.

<sup>99</sup>

Jefferson Papers, February 9, 1808.

a Federalist majority but now he had helped to dress it up, and the Western Territory had been acquired; so he thought they should stay there.)<sup>100</sup> The last letter from Lyon to Jefferson that the writer has been able to find is concerned with one question only: that of development of copper mines in the region of Lake Superior.<sup>101</sup> Lyon outlines a plan of operation and control for the proposed mines that will furnish the West with plenty of cheap money and also with copper for other uses, the usual supply from England being then cut off. It is interesting to note that these mines, which first began operating in the 40's, were soon making incredible profits. Stocks selling originally at \$18.50 per share paid dividends of \$20.00 the next year.<sup>102</sup> One can only conjecture what would have been the result if Lyon's suggestions had been acted upon. This letter has none of the warmth of feeling or expressions of appreciation that characterize Lyon's earlier letters.

In the election of 1810 Lyon was defeated in his race for Congress. His congressional career ceased with the close of the eleventh Congress, about midnight on Sunday, March 3, 1811. His last vote in Congress was for a bill authorizing the President to call for 50,000 volunteers.<sup>103</sup> He again retired to Eddyville, but he was too old and the circumstances were too adverse for him ever to come back again--although he almost succeeded.

<sup>100</sup> Annals of Congress, Tenth Congress, First Session, II, 1535.

<sup>101</sup> Madison Papers, December 24, 1808. Addressed to Jefferson.

<sup>102</sup> Hunt's Merchant's Magazine, XXII, 112.

<sup>103</sup> Henry Adams, History of the United States, 1801-1817, 9 vols. (New York, 1911), V, 358.

## CHAPTER V

## POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL REVERSES

Matthew Lyon's entire career is marked by a high degree of perseverance. He probably felt in leaving Washington in 1811 that he would again return; yet he knew that war was in the offing and must occur soon, and he was also quite fearful as to the outcome. He had been defeated by Colonel New by a large majority in the congressional election of 1810.<sup>1</sup> In 1811 he went to St. Louis, probably for the sole purpose of establishing a residence there, and being assured in 1812 that he was eligible to election as a delegate from Louisiana Territory, he became a candidate for that office but was defeated by Edward Hempstead.<sup>2</sup> In that same year he experienced the financial loss already mentioned in Chapter IV. Since his time was required in Kentucky, he was not able to make a vigorous campaign as was his custom.

From this time till 1817 very little is known or can be found concerning Lyon's activities. That he remained in Eddyville is shown by the records of the county court of Caldwell, for he was commissioned a justice of the peace in that county by Governor Scott on October 3, 1811,<sup>3</sup> having been duly recommended as a proper person for the place in September of that

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<sup>1</sup> Kentucky Gazette, August 28, 1810.

<sup>2</sup> Edwards Papers, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Executive Journal, 1808-1812, p. 164. Manuscript in possession of Kentucky State Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky.

year.<sup>4</sup> To some this apparent descent in the political scale would have been humiliating, but it was not so to Matthew Lyon. He had to do something or die. He seems never to have acted in a public capacity for the money to be had from it; few men did in those days, when the salaries of public officials were extremely low. John Pope in 1808 tries to offer some encouragement to Minian Edwards to become a candidate for Congress, telling him, "Your wages would support you if you should bring your lady with you."<sup>5</sup> So far as is known, Lyon never took Madam Lyon, as he was wont to call his wife, to Washington. Lyon evidently got a great deal of satisfaction from acting in the capacity of "squire." He at least was serving the people. In 1816, he was licensed under a bond of 500 pounds to perform marriage ceremonies.<sup>6</sup> His negroes are said to have been married by him, an unusual occurrence in slave-holding communities.

When Caldwell County was established in 1809, Eddyville was chosen for the first county seat, and Lyon deeded to the justices of the county, land for a public square, to be held as long as the county seat remained at Eddyville.<sup>7</sup> On May 10, 1817, while Lyon was still acting as justice of the peace, the four commissioners appointed to appraise Eddyville or Princeton as the county seat took oath before Lyon and expressed their opinion that it should be removed to Princeton.<sup>8</sup> At the first court

<sup>4</sup> Caldwell County Order Book A, p. 169.

<sup>5</sup> Edwards Papers, p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Caldwell County Order Book B, p. 56.

<sup>7</sup> Caldwell County Deed Book A, p. 210.

<sup>8</sup> Caldwell County Order Book B, p. 135.



held in Princeton July 29, 1817, Lyon was present, but the records do not show that he was there in August or thereafter. In December of that year he went to Frankfort to protest against the removal of the county seat from Eddyville,<sup>9</sup> but his trip was unavailing in that respect; Slaughter and his appointees were not in sympathy with Lyon.

Before Lyon's financial disaster of 1812 he had begun building on the hill overlooking the river a handsome brick residence, which when completed cost over \$5000 and was the finest home in that neighborhood.<sup>10</sup> This house was sold and resold numerous times in the period from 1820 to 1822<sup>11</sup> to satisfy Lyon's creditors, but each time it was bought in at a nominal sum by Fidelia C. Sharp, who ordered the deed of conveyance to be made to Chittenden Lyon.<sup>12</sup> It has been stated that Lyon at the age of sixty-eight recovered from his financial embarrassments,<sup>13</sup> but these records and Lyon's own statements concerning his financial condition in 1818-1820 contradict this statement. Chittenden redeeded to his father in 1815 the 200-acre tract on which Eddyville stood, the tract that was regarded as the homeplace,<sup>14</sup> but in 1816 it was sold to satisfy one of Lyon's creditors.

9

McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 496.

10

Roe, Aunt Leanna, p. 197.

11

Caldwell County Deed Book D, p. 32.

12

Ibid.

13 John Wilson Townsend, Kentucky in American Letters, 2 vols. (Cedar Rapids, Iowa; 1913), I, 218.

14 Caldwell County Deed Book E, p. 220.



In 1814 and again in 1818 Lyon was a candidate for Congress but was defeated each time, in the latter instance by Judge Alney McLean.<sup>15</sup> In 1816 Lyon refrained from entering the race, promising his support to Parton, a younger man;<sup>16</sup> however, David Walker, a man older than Lyon, was elected, and so Lyon decided to try for re-election in the next campaign.<sup>17</sup> That he had hopes of being elected is shown by his letter to Woosley and Smith, editors of the Reporter, in which he wrote:

Tell my friends and they will be pleased to hear the news, that my election is in a fairer way than I expected. The appearance now is that I shall have 3 fourths of the votes of those three counties, Christian, Livingston, and Caldwell, and they give about 5 eighths of the votes of the district. In Hopkins and Union I expect scattering majorities and a scattering vote in the rest. . . . I have had 500 of my circular letters printed in Christian and beside printing in that poor paper, they have been snatched at with avidity.<sup>18</sup>

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In this circular letter Lyon declares himself opposed to increased salaries provided by the fourteenth Congress; the salaries of congressmen had been raised to \$3000 annually (Lyon had never received more than \$6 per day for his services in Washington). He also states his opposition to the act of Congress which prohibited a sale of munitions to the Latin-American countries, expressing his joy over their having acquired the spirit of '75. He called that neutrality which refuses arms to an unarmed nation for defense against an armed enemy hypocritical and spurious.<sup>20</sup> The

<sup>15</sup> Draper M S S. 6 CC 72, p. 2, March 14, 1818.

<sup>16</sup> Reporter, February 18, 1818.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Draper MSS. 6 CC 77, p. 3, May 1, 1818.

<sup>19</sup> Reporter, February 18, 1818.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

press and the letters of public men of the period are replete with expressions that disclose a sincere and very ardent sympathy for the South American countries. Lyon says that if the other nations had treated the United States thus in its struggle for independence, Burgoyne and Cornwallis would never have been taken.<sup>21</sup>

On the question of western lands he says he has always stood for low prices, long terms of credit, and the sale of a smaller acreage than 640 acres. The new Congress, he says, is advocating an increase by one-third of the present purchase prices. Lyon advises that the price be reduced one-half, saying that the increase in sale would take care of the tax reduction and that the country would at the same time expand.<sup>22</sup>

Ferris Ewing, writing from Ewingsville to the Reporter relative to the election of 1818, has this to say of Lyon:

. . . . His palpable apostacy when in Congress from Democratic principles--his long devotion to the cause of opposition, his intemperance, his ungentlemanly manner,--have sunk his popularity so far below par that he will never be able to regain it. . . .<sup>23</sup>

Ewing also expresses a desire that the United States recognize the independence of the South American Countries.<sup>24</sup>

From the period 1812 to 1817, as has been indicated, Lyon was but little before the people. Evidently he was spending much of his time attempting to recuperate financially. During this period Lyon kept up his friendship with Andrew Jackson, which had begun in the alien and sedition period, or earlier.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Draper MSS. 6 CC 72, p. 2, March 14, 1818.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

Then Jackson is said to have been greatly distressed over Lyon's troubles.<sup>25</sup> In 1804 Lyon supported Jackson in his desire to be appointed governor of the newly established Orleans Territory,<sup>26</sup> but the appointment was given to Claiborne instead.

Lyon's letters to Jackson, like those to and from Gallatin, indicate a personal acquaintance between the families. Lyon and Jackson are said to have visited each other often, and Lyon is said to have been the individual who was responsible for opening Jackson's eyes to the real Burr.<sup>27</sup> In 1814 Lyon writes Jackson<sup>28</sup> congratulating him on his brilliant success at New Orleans; in 1816 he again writes, enclosing a copy of a publication of Lyon's relative to the Indians. Lyon knew this article would find an interested reader in Jackson, for on this question as on many others these ardent democrats were agreed. As a postscript to this letter Lyon writes: "May I yet live to hear of your planting the American Standard on the walls of Carthagenia."<sup>29</sup> Thus early did Lyon advocate "manifest destiny." In 1818 Lyon writes to Jackson requesting whatever information Jackson can give relative to a negro slave belonging to a neighbor of Lyon. The slave had been conscripted for service while on a trip to New Orleans during the War of 1812 and had died from the exposures he underwent in the service. The neighbor wants compensation for

<sup>25</sup> John S. Bassett, Life of Andrew Jackson (New York, 1928), p. 33.

<sup>26</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>27</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit. p. 466.

<sup>28</sup> Jackson Papers, June 2, 1814.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., August 20, 1816.

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the loss of his negro.

A later letter to Jackson is a complaint against the Tennessee Senator, who voted against Lyon's petition to Congress for a reimbursement of the fine he paid in 1799. The Louisiana Senators,<sup>31</sup> "who knew not Joseph," had voted with the Federalists, and the Indiana Senators and one from Mississippi had been drawn off. Lyon said, by the "Siren" voice of Ohio. Brethit and Crittenden had urged Lyon not to expose the actions of the Tennessee Senators to the people through the press until he had consulted Jackson, who was a good friend to Eaton, one of the Senators. In this letter Lyon expresses his approval of Jackson's actions and tells him he has written some articles in his favor and sent them to R. M. Johnson, of Bardstown, who promised to have them published in his paper.<sup>32</sup> Lyon says his pen could not remain idle while his old friend is being so severely criticized. If Lyon could have lived to see the day of Jackson's inaugural, no one would have felt more strongly than he that the people had triumphed. ✓ Lyon was a true prototype of Jacksonian Democracy. The ideas of Jackson and Lyon and their principles of government are almost wholly similar.

Few if any periods of political strife in Kentucky have been more intense than that of 1816-1817, when the new election question was before the people. George Madison had been inaugurated as

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., August 10, 1818.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., June 8, 1819.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

governor in September, 1816; on October 16, he died, Kentucky's<sup>100</sup>  
first governor to die in office.<sup>33</sup> Madison was a Republican, but  
Slaughter was not. Charles S. Todd, of Lexington, had been appointed  
secretary of state by Madison, and upon the accession of Slaughter  
to the gubernatorial chair, Todd wrote him saying that he did not  
wish to embarrass the new administration in any way and would offer  
no objections if the governor wished to fill his place by another.  
It was not a resignation, but Slaughter accepted it as such and  
appointed John Pope to be secretary.<sup>34</sup> Pope was very unpopular  
in the state at the time, having been a supporter in Congress of  
the Bank of the United States and having objected to the War of  
1812.<sup>35</sup> He had just been defeated by Clay in the congressional  
election. Representative of the opinions of many of the people,  
there appeared in the Reporter, December 11, 1816, the following  
notice:

#### HORRID MURDER

Colonel Slaughter, the acting governor has murdered  
the feelings of above sixty thousand free men of  
this state, by appointing Mr. Pope secretary; nor  
is this all,--by the same stab he has committed  
political suicide!! 36

This article was signed A. L. In the same issue of the Reporter  
is a statement copied from the Ohio Monitor, which reads: "Ken-  
tucky, the boast of Republicanism, has been delivered over to

<sup>33</sup> Collins, op. cit., I, p. 519.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Kern, editor, History of Kentucky, 5 vols. (Chicago, 1922), II, 583.

<sup>35</sup> Reporter, January 8, 1817.

<sup>36</sup> Reporter, December 11, 1816.

the influence of Popery."

Slaughter further enraged the people by appointing General M. D. Harding, another Federalist, to fill out the unexpired term of William T. Barry, who had resigned from the Senate of the United States.<sup>37</sup> The strife thus begun continued for more than a year, through two legislatures. Much was said and written in the hopes of influencing the legislature to call a new election. Breckenridge, Crittenden, Barry, Bledsoe, and Lyon were among the strongest contenders for the new election, while the strong prerogative men, who upheld the right of Slaughter to accede to the governorship, were Blackburn, Mills, Underwood, and Rudd.

When the legislature convened in December, Lyon hurried to Frankfort, where he said he was no better known than if he had just arrived from Russia.<sup>38</sup> He had three purposes in going to Frankfort; to object to the removal of the Caldwell County seat from Eddyville to Princeton; to inquire into his chances of being chosen United States Senator, a position to which he had long aspired;<sup>39</sup> and to lobby for a new election. He was unsuccessful<sup>40</sup> in each attempt; the county seat was removed; he received only two votes for Senator,<sup>41</sup> and the legislature voted down a resolution providing for the appointment of a committee to inquire into the advisability of calling a new election.<sup>42</sup> Lyon was invited by the

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<sup>37</sup> Kerr, loc. cit.

<sup>38</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 496.

<sup>39</sup> Jackson Papers, August 20, 1816.

<sup>40</sup> Caldwell County Order Book B, p. 151.

<sup>41</sup> Kentucky Gazette, December 9, 1816.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., January 27, 1817.



legislature to attend its sessions, and he accepted and made use  
<sup>43</sup>  
of the invitation.

The press of the state entered into the fight with zest and strong partisan leanings, and the newspapers were filled each week with articles written by the political leaders. As was customary in those days, many articles appeared with non de plumes. Franklin, Cato, Publius, Plain Truth, and others addressed letters to the people through the newspapers. Lyon wrote more letters than any other of the new election group, but he signed M. Lyon to his letters in a bold hand. He did not desire to remain as obscure in Kentucky's capitol as a Russian peasant, and, besides, his spirit always revolted at a lack of frankness. On this question Lyon wrote in all twelve letters. In the first he says that the constitution states that all power is inherent in the people, to whom the right of free suffrage shall not be denied, and that the supreme executive power of the state shall be vested in a governor, not a lieutenant  
<sup>44</sup>  
governor. In his succeeding articles, all of which he addressed to the Reporter, Argus, Palladium, Gazette, and all other Kentucky newspapers, Lyon points out how by permitting the lieutenant governor to be acting governor for four years, the state could be  
<sup>45</sup>  
ruled by the same individual for life. Slaughter, he says, can continue as acting governor these four years. He will then be eligible for the actual governorship for the next four years, and by a proper distribution of favors and patronage can insure his

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<sup>43</sup> Reporter, February 26, 1817.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., January 8, 1817.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., January 29, 1817.



successful election. At the end of that period he will again be eligible to be a candidate for lieutenant-governor,<sup>46</sup> and could arrange for a "straw" man to run as governor, who would resign immediately after his inauguration. Then the lieutenant-governor would accede to the "acting" governorship, and the whole cycle could be re-enacted for life.

The prerogative men said that the constitution did not provide for a new election; they maintained that the executive power was so trifling that no danger could arise to the state by the lieutenant-governor<sup>47</sup> acting as governor for four years. This belittling of the executive power Lyon said was "throwing the tub to the whale" to draw off the people from the real question, their right of election.

He maintained that while the constitution did not expressly say that a new election was to be called in case of the death of the governor, it was inferred one would be called and for this reason had provided that a governor could not succeed himself till after seven years. Five years, Lyon pointed out, would have been sufficient to prevent a governor's succeeding himself for a full term, and the seven-year period had evidently been chosen<sup>48</sup> to prevent also his being elected for a part of a term.

So strong was the party feeling that Rudd, one of Slaughter's followers, inadvertently admitted that even if he did believe

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<sup>46</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>

Ibid., June 4, 1817.

<sup>48</sup>

Ibid., January 27, 1817.

Slaughter's succession to be illegitimate, he would still vote<sup>49</sup> to uphold it, rather than hazard the results of a new election.<sup>50</sup> Lyon made the most of this statement of Rudd's. The fight centered around the constitutional provision that the lieutenant-governor, in case of death, impeachment, absence, resignation, or total disability of the governor, should be governor "until another be duly qualified." Breckenridge, who had been a member of the constitutional convention in 1799, and who for the most part, at least, had written the constitution, said that a new<sup>51</sup> election was intended in case of the death of the governor.

Lyon stayed in Frankfort for the entire legislative session and went home determined to arouse the people to an assertion of their rights by electing representatives and senators that fall pledged to a new election, and that is what the people did in the August election. Only thirteen of those who opposed the new election in the House were re-elected, while a majority of those who were for it were returned. Of the ninety members,<sup>52</sup> fifty-seven were elected on promises to support the new election. J. C. Breckenridge and John Parker announced for the Kentucky<sup>53</sup> legislature on the New Election Ticket, as did others.

When the new legislature met, a bill providing for a new election was rushed through the House by a vote of 56 to 30 but<sup>54</sup> was voted down in the Senate 18 to 14; however, a bill was

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., April 16, 1817.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Kentucky Gazette, July 5, 1817.

<sup>52</sup> Reporter, September 17, 1817.

<sup>53</sup> Kentucky Gazette, July 5, 1817.

<sup>54</sup> Reporter, February 19, 1817. Gazette, January 27, 1817.

passed advocating that a constitutional convention be called to  
 55  
 define more clearly the manner of gubernatorial succession.  
 The feeling of party strife soon died down to be renewed in  
 the new court struggle, in which it met a final decision,  
 and it was not until the convention of 1850 that the new election  
 question was finally decided. The constitution of that year  
 provides that if a governor die or for any reason be disqualified  
 during the first two years of his term, the lieutenant-governor  
 shall succeed him only till the next general election; but if  
 the governor die or be disqualified during the last two years,  
 the lieutenant-governor shall succeed him for the balance of  
 56  
 the term.

Lyon was by far the strongest contender for the new election.  
 He felt that he was fighting for the rights of the people and was  
 again in his glory. He could appear often in print and with  
 articles as lengthy as he desired with assurance of their being  
 given space, for Smith and Worsley, editors of the Reporter, were  
 intimate acquaintances of his. They respected his ability and  
 admired his courage. For Lyon's vehemence he was called a  
 "crazy old fool," and an anonymous letter from Lexington told  
 57  
 him that he was meddling where he had no business. A new  
 name was invented for Lyon's type of writing; it was called slang-

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Kerr, op. cit., II, 591.

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Bennett Young, Constitutions of Kentucky and Their History  
 (Louisville, 1890), p. 40.

57

Reporter, May 17, 1817.

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Whang . Lyon wrote Pope in October, 1817, asking him if he were  
 going to resign.<sup>59</sup> Pope answered that he was not contemplating  
 doing so and took Lyon to task for furnishing Pope's enemies  
 an excuse to attack him.<sup>60</sup> Pope and Lyon had been associated in  
 Congress; the letters of the former reveal a personality who  
 cares too much for self and too little for others. Lyon was  
 exactly his anti-type. In his answer to Lyon, Pope accuses the  
 former of a desire for fame, to make a new noise in the world.  
 This accusation was nothing new to Lyon; in his congressional  
 days he had often been accused of "making a noise."

These articles by Lyon on the new election question are of  
 particular interest in that they reveal his literary taste. He  
 makes allusions to Sterne, Gray, Swift, Shakespeare, Pope, and  
 others, and to the Bible; his quotations are appropriate and well-  
 chosen. His last letter, No. XII, in which he compliments the  
 people on the result of the August election, begins thus:

"Blest is the region where the people reign,   61  
 And merits its just, its bright reward attain."

These letters, though vehemently partisan and radical, are  
 the work of a man who was fully aware of constitutional provisions  
 and the origin and purposes of government; the expressions of one

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<sup>58</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>59</sup> Durrett Collection, F 446, D S (MS), November 2, 1817.

<sup>60</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>61</sup> Reporter, September 17, 1917.

who was conversant with and appreciative of good literature. His educational foundation, which had been well-laid in his early years by that classical school in Dublin, had been amazingly strengthened and extended by his indefatigable habits of reading and writing. His new election articles are masterpieces of irony, satire, and wit, and while he failed in accomplishing the desired results wholly and immediately, the convention of 1849 provided what he had contended for, thus assuring to the people their right to be governed by a chief Executive chosen by them for that purpose. Lyon's animadversion to the lawyers is another striking characteristic of these lengthy vitriolic articles; he had little faith in the integrity of men of that profession and criticized them particularly for their citing Blackstone and using Latin quotations unintelligible to the people.<sup>62</sup> One of the prerogative men had said Necessitas habet non legem, and one old farmer inquired who that man Necessitas<sup>63</sup> was and what he had to do with the election.

Having broken into the press in the new election question, Lyon wrote frequent articles thereafter, especially for the Reporter, the editorial comments of which were quite favorable to him.<sup>64</sup> The next question that was the subject of Lyon's public letters was that of encouraging manufacturing in the United States.<sup>65</sup> There were two hindrances, he said, that kept the national government from doing its duty towards home manufacturers: the

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., April 2, 1817.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., September 8, 1819.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

cupidity of the North and its eagerness for foreign trade and commerce and the South's unwillingness to pay extra prices for goods manufactured in the United States, even though the increased quality overbalance the increase in price.<sup>66</sup> So the states, he said, would have to legislate for themselves, and he evolved a cure for hard times<sup>67</sup> in Kentucky (This was during the panic of 1819). He advocated that the legislature of the state pass an act prohibiting after a specified time the importation of foreign goods into the state.<sup>68</sup> Of course people began immediately to question the right of the state to enact such a law. It was contended that it was unconstitutional; this gave Lyon an opportunity for writing other articles in defense of the constitutionality of such a plan.<sup>69</sup> He argued that there were many powers given Congress that were concurrent with those of the states within their own boundaries. The power to regulate and control commerce was one of these, he said, and his plan could be considered no more a violation of the national constitution than the state's tax laws, which taxed merchants, etc. He maintained that if this were a violation of the constitution, then every act of a legislature laying taxes on peddlers was also unconstitutional.<sup>70</sup> An editorial comment in the Reporter called attention to Lyon's letter, saying that there might be a doubt as to the state's having the power to enact the law advocated, but adding that it might

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Reporter, October 6, 1819.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.



be done in an indirect way by levying taxes sufficiently high to be prohibitive on imported articles sold in the state, since<sup>71</sup> several articles were at this time thus prohibited.

Lyon attended the legislative session of 1819-1820 at Frank-<sup>72</sup>fort, hoping to get this law enacted. He did not bring the question before the public until after the election because he<sup>73</sup> feared it would be defeated if it were made a campaign issue. He wrote to the citizens of Philadelphia, urging them to ask<sup>74</sup> their legislature to pass a similar law. Lyon had been a protectionist since the 1780's, when he asked the Vermont assembly to place a duty on nails imported into that state to protect<sup>75</sup> his nail-making industry there. Nothing came of Lyon's efforts in this direction, and he returned to Eddyville after the adjournment of the legislature and wrote a review of its actions in two articles that appeared in the Reporter.

This legislature had made an effort to better the financial<sup>76</sup> conditions of the state and to give relief to the debtors. The three measures under consideration were the Relief, the Property<sup>77</sup> Law, and the Replevin. Lyon, who hated banks as much as Jackson ever did, said the number of Shylocks had been increased by the facilities offered by the too numerous banks, and that the hubble

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., September 8, 1819.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., December 29, 1819.

<sup>75</sup> Adams, History of Fair Haven, p. 62.

<sup>76</sup> Reporter, May 24, 1820.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.



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 had burst. Now the creditors were calling for their debts, and the debtors were calling for relief. The act of the legislature enabling the debtor class to delay payments for at least one year brought additional financial burdens on Lyon, who was still interested in the mercantile business. He said the legislature  
 79  
 chose the worst course.

On the subject of Western expansion, Lyon could never say enough. The sixteenth Congress had contemplated a withdrawal  
 80  
 of credit for the sale of public lands. To this Lyon objected; it would, of course, hinder the growth of the West. The Federalists, he said, were responsible for the measure, and he advocated in those early days a "farm bloc." If the group of 16 western Senators would combine against the other 28 Senators and pursue their own interests, they would have no cause for complaint against the  
 81  
 national government. To withdraw credit for sale of public lands, meant late and unhappy marriages, Lyon thought, explaining that if a young man had to wait until he got \$120 plus stock for a farm, he would have to go out alone, which meant that he would either dissipate or lose his girl. In Lyon's opinion, men who did not marry before they were thirty, were poor prospects for good husbands. It was only natural that he should advocate early

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78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

80 Reporter, October 27, 1819.

81 Ibid.

marriages and large families. In this respect he practiced what he preached, and his children did likewise. In Lyon's letter on Western lands, he condemns the Easterners for expressing a fear that the West would by and by shake off its land debts. "We have had," he said, "no Shays Rebellion or whiskey or hot water rebellion in the West." Burr's folly had been projected in the East and discouraged and frustrated in the West, he wrote, and he pointed out that when the United States should extend to the Pacific, the West would have become central.<sup>82</sup> In conclusion Lyon reviews a project for the disposal of public lands he had published at the time of the adoption of the constitution, which was to require residence on the land granted and to render the land inalienable by the donee for a period of ten years.<sup>83</sup> Lyon's objections to the Missouri Compromise and his advocacy of Butler over Adair for governor in 1820, in both of which instances he was again on the losing side, complete his public letters in Kentucky.

All during the period from 1811 to 1820 Lyon had been exerting every effort possible to become again connected in some way with the national government. In 1819 he is said to have gone to St. Genevieve, Missouri, where he entered the congressional race, being defeated by Scott.<sup>84</sup> His political articles, addressed from Eddyville during this period, are conclusive evidence that if a residence were established in the Territory at this time, it was

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Shinn, op. cit., p. 137.

only of a transitory type.

Failing to secure re-election to Congress, he turned to sons of his former friends (he was now old and had outlived most of those who fought for and against him in '98) for recommendations for executive appointments. To have applied for the favor from Madison would have been useless; but when Monroe came in, Lyon wrote John T. Mason, son of the late Steven Thompson Mason, asking for his support and expressing a desire to be given a place in the new territory then being formed, saying that many of his Western friends were now residing there.<sup>85</sup> He also wrote McKee and Macon, requesting their support.

At the same time his own financial distress, a friendly Executive, and a desire to see his name cleared of all reproach, caused him to renew his petition to Congress, asking for a refund of the financial loss he had incurred, illegally and unconstitutionally, in 1799.<sup>86</sup> This money, however, was not refunded until in 1840,<sup>87</sup> when Congress voted to reimburse Lyon's heirs, and Van Buren wrote the governor of Kentucky, on July 4, 1840, declining an invitation to visit that state, but remarking that he had that day signed a bill which he hoped would be considered as indicative of his attitude towards Kentucky.

It was not until 1820, however, that Monroe gave Lyon an

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<sup>85</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit.

<sup>86</sup> Reporter, November 24, 1819.

<sup>87</sup> Lyon, op. cit., p. 16.

appointment. It was in the West, as Lyon desired, but, by a strange irony of fate, among the Indians, whom Lyon had classed among the "Bears and the Wolves."<sup>88</sup> Lyon was now more than seventy years of age, and his family and friends endeavored to dissuade him from accepting the appointment. Their entreaties, however, were in vain, and so he said farewell to his friends and family and boarded a steamboat for Spadra Bluff, Arkansas, where his new work as factor of the Cherokee Indians at that place was to be,<sup>89</sup> a work which was to be the final chapter of an eventful career.

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<sup>88</sup> Jackson Papers, August 20, 1816.

<sup>89</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 472.

## CHAPTER VI

## CLOSING YEARS

"A dirge for the brave old pioneer,  
 Columbus of the land,  
 Who guided freedom's proud career  
 Beyond the conquered strand;  
 And gave her pilgrim sons a home  
 No monarch step profanes,  
 Free as the chainless winds that roam  
 Upon its boundless plains." <sup>1</sup>

It was with a true pioneer spirit that Matthew Lyon fared forth, alone (Mrs. Lyon had been dissuaded from her purpose to attend him on his journey on account of the Indian dangers and the hardships that might be experienced), <sup>2</sup> for a frontier settlement, then inhabited by Indians only save for the presence of one white man, the sub-agent, a Mr. Jones, who greeted Lyon <sup>3</sup> kindly upon his arrival. These two experienced many hardships in the period that ensued. They slept on bear skins, and their diet consisted chiefly of bear meat and hoe-cake, cooked by the interpreter. If Lyon permitted his prejudices to play any part in his relations with the Indians at this post, which was located on the Arkansas River above Little Rock, there are no indications of it. Shinn says that in many respects Lyon was <sup>4</sup> the greatest of all the agents in Arkansas. ✓

Lyon was seventy years of age but in excellent health when

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore O'Hara, "The Old Pioneer," From Townsend, op. cit., I, 218.

<sup>2</sup> Roe, Aunt Leanne, p. 205.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 306.

<sup>4</sup> Shinn, op. cit., p. 131.

he undertook this work, and he felt that he had many years before him, in which he could do much good. His salary is said to have been \$1300 annually.<sup>5</sup> On September 5, 1820, the Office of Indian Trade addressed him at Lexington, acknowledging receipt of his acceptance of Monroe's appointment.<sup>6</sup>

For the third time Lyon began the development of an industrial center on the frontier. He and Jones planted a garden and built a house in the summer<sup>7</sup> of 1821; he encouraged the Indians to raise cotton, promising them that they should have a gin the next year. The trade of the post for this year is said to have been a lucrative one, and in February of the next year Lyon started in a boat of his own construction on a trip to New Orleans, where he exchanged his furs and peltries for the needed supplies and started homeward.<sup>8</sup> At the mouth of the White River he stored his supplies and proceeded to Eddyville, where he visited his family.<sup>9</sup> Again attempts were made to dissuade the old pioneer, who declared he felt ten years younger than when he had left Kentucky, from continuing in the service of the government, and again these efforts were futile.<sup>10</sup> There was no earthly power or influence strong enough to change Lyon's once-formed opinions so long as his conscience led him to believe he

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<sup>5</sup> Roe, Aunt Leanna, p. 205.

<sup>6</sup> Office of Indian Affairs to writer, September 14, 1931.

<sup>7</sup> Roe, Aunt Leanna, p. 207.

<sup>8</sup> Niles Register, June 29, 1822.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Roe, Aunt Leanna, p. 208.



was doing right. His plans for the development of this Indian post were projected far into the future; he saw in his imagination another frontier industrial center expanding under his guiding hand, and around this vision of the future all his thoughts and his hopes were centered.

After a short visit to Eddyville Lyon loaded a keel boat with tools and machinery, including the cotton gin he had promised the Indians, and again started westward, hoping to reach the Arkansas in time to be towed up the river by a steamboat.<sup>11</sup> On this departure from Eddyville he was accompanied by a white man and his wife, a Mr. and Mrs. Griffie, and by Aunt Leanna, who was to be his cook and housekeeper. He took with him household furnishings to make more comfortable his new home, and his plans were to move Mrs. Lyon and the younger children to Arkansas that fall.<sup>12</sup> Upon reaching the Arkansas Lyon was disappointed, for the water of that river had already fallen to a degree sufficient to prohibit steamboats from ascending it. He was anxious to reach Spadra Bluff as soon as possible, and during the trip he often aided the hands in accelerating the progress of the boat.<sup>13</sup> Lyon was very fleshy at this time and also seventy-two years of age. Although his friends in Little Rock could see when he passed there no ill effects of the undue exertions he had undergone, he suffered a serious illness soon after his arrival at Spadra Bluff in June.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 212.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 209.

<sup>13</sup> Niles Register, June 29, 1822.

Industrial and political activities had long been inseparable to Lyon. Perhaps he realized that it was only in a frontier environment that men like him had a chance. He did not long remain an unknown personage in Arkansas Territory, having introduced himself in his own characteristic manner--in a five-column article<sup>14</sup> in the Arkansas Gazette of March 21, 1821. In this article he took issue with Calhoun for drawing and with Monroe for signing the Choctaw Treaty of 1820, by the terms of which white settlers had been forced to move from lands already assigned them. This article of Lyon's has been called a cold-blooded, straight-from-the-shoulder argument.<sup>15</sup> Immediately,<sup>16</sup> it is said, all Arkansas wanted to know who M. Lyon was; they realized they had a man of affairs in their midst who could "enter the lists of logic" and convince Monroe and Calhoun of their errors.<sup>16</sup> They wanted to know what Bates, their delegate in Congress, had been doing when he permitted the treaty to be made, and they demanded that Lyon announce as a candidate for delegate to Congress from Arkansas. Lyon did become a candidate, and of the campaign and election Shinn says:

In 1821 he (Bates) had but one opponent, and that one, one of the most remarkable men in the United States. He was pitted against Lyon and really beaten by him, but Bates and Crittenden (Robert) had the machinery. Lyon was a good machinist but was not in the power house.<sup>17</sup>

The official returns of the election showed that Lyon was a loser

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<sup>14</sup> Shinn, op. cit., pp. 131-144.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

by sixty votes.<sup>18</sup> Lyon contested the election in the House of Representatives, saying that it had been held unfairly; but not being able to produce evidence to substantiate his claims, he<sup>19</sup> was permitted to withdraw his petition. James relates an amusing incident of Lyon's campaign of 1821:

Here I saw Matthew Lyon, then quite an old man, canvassing for Congress. . . . He came into Little Rock with the judge and the lawyers, from Diamond Hill, the day after the grand moving of the town. He rode a mule, which had thrown him into a bayou, and his appearance as he came in, covered with mud from head to foot, was the subject of much laughter from his companions and the town of Little Rock. . . .<sup>20</sup>

The pathos and humor of "The Last Leaf" is depicted in this scene; and it was only his perseverance and tenacity of purpose that had resulted in his clinging so long. It has been said that Lyon was the first delegate to Congress from Arkansas,<sup>21</sup> and again that he was the second person chosen for this honor, but did not live to take his seat;<sup>22</sup> but Lyon did not go to Arkansas until 1820, he was defeated in 1821, and he died before the next election.

The long trip Lyon made from Spadra Bluff and his return by way of Eddyville aroused much comment and speculation as to the possibility of further development of transportation facilities.<sup>23</sup> It was considered a remarkable feat for an old man to make a trip over 3000 miles in three months, and Hezekiah Niles, who had made lavish use of printer's ink in placing

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<sup>18</sup> ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Hinds, Precedents of the House of Representatives, I, p. 563.

<sup>20</sup> James, Three Years Among the Indians, p. 102.

<sup>21</sup> Collins, op. cit., II, 591.

<sup>22</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 472.

<sup>23</sup> Niles Register, June 29, 1822.

exclamation points after Lyon's "Cure for Hard Times," with far-reaching vision prophesied that the time would come when people would spend their vacations on Lake Michilmacinac, and that there would be steamboats on Lake Superior!<sup>24</sup>

Lyon amused himself on the trip by writing more articles for publication. He wrote a long letter on May 3, 1822, to Joseph Meigs, Commissioner of the General Land Office, at Washington, protesting against prosecution of the rivermen<sup>25</sup> who cut wood for fuel from the wild lands along the Mississippi, and he also addressed a letter to Niles on the prospective<sup>26</sup> presidential candidate of 1824. Niles did not publish this letter till after Lyon's death, when a portion of it appeared<sup>27</sup> under the caption "A Political Curiosity," which in some ways might be considered an appropriate appellation for him who penned it. It is to be regretted that Niles did not publish the entire letter; one will always wonder how nearly Lyon approached accuracy in his estimation of the probable candidates in the election of 1824 and their respective merits.

This voyage of Lyon's produced an illness that was fatal. Of this trip Wharton says:

This was the last time he was to drop down the current of the Mississippi, or visit, by way of an interlude, his second home in Kentucky, for robust, as he was, the chill of old age was at hand, and like the night of northern climates, was destined to drop upon him without the notice of an intermediate twilight.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Shinn, op. cit., p. 137.

<sup>26</sup> Niles Register, December 7, 1822.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Wharton, State Trials of the United States. Quoted by McLaughlin, op. cit., pp. 473-474.

Lyon approached his last illness, far away from home and family, with a manner characteristic of his entire life. He always wanted to be "informed" on a subject before he took any action thereon, and so he ordered the young man attending him to bring him his Medical Adviser (Lyon had surrounded himself here with books and newspapers) and his medicine case.<sup>29</sup> The young man read aloud the symptoms of the various diseases; Lyon decided which corresponded to his ailments, portioned out the medicine to be administered, and gave the directions to be followed. He made arrangements for settling his business affairs and prepared final messages for his loved ones in Kentucky.<sup>30</sup> He made out emancipation papers for Aunt Leanna, although he knew they were not binding since he had deeded her to Chittenden in 1812; however, he felt they would be of some protection to her on her journey home.<sup>31</sup> A physician from Little Rock was summoned when his condition became alarming, and from a nearby mission the missionaries came. All efforts were unavailing,<sup>32</sup> and Lyon died August 1, 1822.

He was buried at Spadra Bluff in a hardwood casket lined with lead and surrounded by a thick layer of lime. Lyon left these instructions, hoping that his body might be preserved until it could be removed to Kentucky.<sup>33</sup> James, returning from

<sup>29</sup>

Roe, op. cit., p. 216.

<sup>30</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 474.

<sup>31</sup> Roe, Aunt Leanna, p. 217.

<sup>32</sup> Kentucky Reporter, September 30, 1822.

<sup>33</sup> Roe, Aunt Leanna, p. 220.

his long tour through the West, passed through Spadra Bluff in 1824 and made the following notation:

We passed through Spadra Bluff that morning, where I saw the grave of Matthew Lyon, a man who made a considerable figure in politics in the Alien and Sedition times of John Adams. "After life's fitful fever he sleeps well." 34.

Lyon's body was brought to Eddyville in 1833 and reinterred in the cemetery there with Masonic ceremonies. The Reverend John Johnson, of the Nashville circuit, a friend of Lyon's, <sup>35</sup> preached the funeral, which is said to have been attended by four or five thousand people. It is said that the casket was opened, and his features remained for an instant as they had <sup>36</sup> been in life, but almost immediately the body crumbled to dust.

Various and varying estimates have been given of Matthew Lyon's character and of his service to the nation. If the writer may hazard an opinion on a so-much controverted question, it would be to say that his seeming rashness was the result of a logical conclusion reached in meditating upon his knowledge of national and world conditions and a vision more far-reaching than that of most of his contemporaries of America's future greatness. He was courageous, honest, and sincere, and zealous to a fault. Contrary to what may be supposed, he was not impetuous; he acted deliberately and with a purpose; inaction or

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<sup>34</sup> James, op. cit., p. 240.

<sup>35</sup> McLaughlin, op. cit., p. 475.

<sup>36</sup> Roe, Aunt Leanna, p. 219.



procrastination he could not endure. The fallacy of his judgment led to most of his errors. He was ever a crusader for territorial and industrial expansion; yet he ever stood opposed to encroachments upon or abuse of the rights of the people.

The article of Lyon's referred to which appeared in Niles Register after his death, is vibrant with a spirit that dominated his whole career-- opposition to an irresponsible, incapable, and lavish government. He calls Washington "the Modern Venice" and decries the corruptness and the luxury that are practiced there at the expense of "the hard earnings of the people."<sup>37</sup> Lyon himself would have probably chosen this as his last political utterance; yet people of today realize how futile has been his admonition.

And Fate still plays her part. Underneath that eminence where rest the earthly remains of Matthew Lyon, today there stands a building (the Kentucky State Penitentiary) whose high walls with guarded towers are representative of a lack of that principle for which Lyon lived and fought--personal liberty and freedom. And people who pass through that quiet hamlet today are totally heedless and careless of the fact that just above them sleeps one who in his day enjoyed national fame, and who for more than a half century represented the people in one capacity or another. Such, indeed, is Fame, which Clemenceau rightly styles a wisp of smoke that rises, encircles round, and vanishes when life is out.

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